

MARITIME HERITAGE MINNESOTA

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Andy Gibson Excavation and NRHP Nomination Report

2011



This dry nautical excavation of sections of the steamer wreck *Andy Gibson's* starboard gunwale in the Mississippi Riverbank in Aitkin, MN was made possible in part by a grant from the Minnesota Historical and Cultural Grants program, also known as the Legacy Amendment, voted for and supported by the People of the State of Minnesota.

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***Andy Gibson* Excavation and NHRP Nomination Report**

Introduction

Throughout most of the 19th Century, the ‘head of navigation’ of the Mississippi River was perceived to be St. Paul and then later in the century, Minneapolis. As migration into the northern reaches of the Mississippi River Valley occurred and with it, the lumbering industry, travel between specific towns such as Sauk Rapids, Little Falls, and Brainerd by steamboat developed. Further upriver, Aitkin, MN supplied the logging camps that were forming further north, and with this commerce, regular steamboat travel between Aitkin, Sandy Lake, and Grand Rapids began. The steamer *Andy Gibson* was the largest steamboat built for commerce between Aitkin and Grand Rapids. Her size and shallow draft served her well in the area of increased cargo and passenger carrying capacity, but her length did not serve her in ease of navigation because of the sharp turns that characterize this stretch of the Mississippi River. *Andy Gibson* is one of two known steamer shipwrecks in Minnesota’s 674-mile stretch of the Mississippi River, the other being another Aitkin sternwheel steamer called *Swan*. The amount of nautical archaeological information already accumulated about the *Andy Gibson* Wreck Site is significant, and at least half of the wreck remains undocumented in the river channel. The presence of an intact gunwale is a one-of-a-kind *in situ* opportunity to examine the exact construction of a Headwaters Mississippi River steamer, where the real head of navigation is located.

Headwaters Mississippi River Navigation: Historical Background

The steamer *H. M. Rice* and barge *Enterprise* made regular trips from Minneapolis and the Falls of St. Anthony up to the town of Sauk Rapids by 1858. *H. M. Rice* was constructed in 1854 at St. Anthony and weighed 119 tons. *Enterprise* was built in 1857, weighed 73 tons, was converted to a 81-ton sternwheel steamer in 1864, and was lost in 1876. The first Mississippi River steamboat to make it over the rapids at Sauk Rapids was the *North Star*. Built at St. Anthony by Captain John Rawlins in 1856, she took just over a day to navigate the rapids in early May 1858. She made it over the Class I through Class III rapids – without incident (and apparently over the obstructions at Little Falls as well) on her way to Pokegama Falls located 250 miles upriver (where Grand Rapids is now located). It was also reported in mid-June that *North Star* carried 60 people on an 11-day round trip from Crow Wing (downriver of the current location of Aitkin) to Pokegama Falls and back, with a stop at Sandy Lake. Navigation was not possible north of Pokegama Falls, but it was expressed that this trip proved steamboat river travel was possible to Grand Rapids and with that knowledge, increased commerce for the “Upper Mississippi Country” (Lytle and Holdcamper 1975, 65, 91, 159, 259; *Sauk Rapids Frontiersman* 1858a-c; Way 1983, 350.). Despite these high hopes, there was no steamboat traffic above Sauk Rapids for over a decade.

In early 1870, Captain George Houghton constructed and launched the steamboat *Pokegama* at Sauk Rapids for commerce between Little Falls and Pokegama Falls. His enterprise was noted even in St. Paul, when he was interviewed about his business.

Houghton told of an excursion on Sandy Lake and of the 300-mile trip between Little Falls and Pokegama Falls on the *Pokegama*. The sternwheeler *Pokegama* was 100 feet long, 24 feet in the beam, had a two-foot draft, and could carry 160 passengers and 50 tons of freight for the logging towns and camps. In 1870 the railroad was built at the place where Aitkin, MN was founded the following year. This settlement supplied the logging camps that were forming further north, and with this commerce, regular steamboat travel between Aitkin and Grand Rapids began. Throughout the 1870s, Captain Houghton brought news from up north, including navigation conditions, through Aitkin and down to Crow Wing. Often the Mississippi River would be jammed with logs, hindering and sometimes prohibiting steamer traffic. *Pokegama* traveled this stretch of river regularly until she burned at Aitkin on 16 November 1877 (*Brainerd Tribune* 1872, 1877, 1878a, 1878b; Hart 1952, 7, 10; *Saint Paul Daily Pioneer* 1870; *St. Cloud Journal* 1870).

In March 1878, business partners Alsop and Mahlum launched a new steamer at Brainerd, the *White Swan*, to run on the river between Aitkin and Pokegama Falls. She was 70 feet long, 16 feet in the beam, had a three-foot depth of hold, and her 50 horsepower engine and boilers were fabricated at the North Star Iron Works in Minneapolis. She completed her first round trip from Aitkin to Pokegama Falls and back on 23 April, netting \$60.00 for her owners. *White Swan* planned regular Mississippi River packet service, leaving Aitkin on Thursdays and Pokegama Falls on Mondays. Meanwhile, Captain Houghton was constructing a new steamer to replace *Pokegama*, the *City of Aitkin*, to compete with *White Swan* and to continue his already-established river transportation business. *City of Aitkin* was 120 feet long and 22 feet in the beam, left Aitkin on 3 July on a trial excursion to Pokegama Falls. This successful run caused Captain Houghton to schedule regular service between Aitkin and Pokegama Falls on the remaining Wednesdays in July. As for the *White Swan*, her planned schedule didn't pan out because of summer-long low water conditions. The steamer only completed three trips on the river in the Spring, and ceased operations thereafter. Alsop and Mahlum moved the steamer to the Red River of the North by dismantling her and placing her in pieces on railroad flatcars, hoping for better luck there. Two reasons for *White Swan's* unsuccessful Mississippi Headwaters commercial career may be: 1. her reported sidewheel construction making her too wide in low water; and 2. her three-foot depth of hold that when loaded with passengers and cargo, would make her draft too deep (*Brainerd Tribune* 1878a, 1878b, 1878c, 1878d). These two factors didn't allow for efficient and safe navigation of the often shallow and rapids-filled waters between Aitkin and Grand Rapids.

City of Aitkin continued her operations on the Mississippi River between Aitkin and Grand Rapids on her own. Low water conditions in 1879 limited *City of Aitkin's* trips on the river to five, carrying only 150 tons of freight and 120 passengers. The next two years were lucrative for the *City of Aitkin*. She carried 3,937 tons of freight and 1,000 passengers in 1880, and 1,100 tons of freight and 1,540 passengers in 1881. Because of this increased commerce, Captain Houghton constructed the sternwheeler *Fawn*, which was launched in 1882. The *Fawn* was 85 feet long with a 14-foot beam. Together, Houghton's two steamers carried 1,513 tons of freight and 1,764 passengers in 1882

and 1,400 tons of freight and 1,100 passengers between Aitkin and Grand Rapids in 1883. (Hart 1952, 11; U. S. House of Representatives 1889, 1791). The next steamboat of note built for this stretch of the river was the *Andy Gibson*.



Sternwheeler *Fawn* moored next to a wharf with *Andy Gibson* – with steam up – in the background. Courtesy of the Itasca County Historical Society.

Operational History of *Andy Gibson*

Andy Gibson was built over the winter of 1883-1884 in Aitkin by Captain Fred W. Bonness, Lee West, and Edwin B. Lowell, who owned the steamer under E. B. Lowell, and Co., and she was fitted engines and boilers manufactured by D.M. Swain of Stillwater. She was launched on the Mississippi River on 22 April 1884. She was 130 feet long, 32 feet in the beam, and weighed 150 tons – the longest and widest Headwaters Mississippi River steamer constructed. She had a one-foot draft unloaded and two-foot draft when loaded with 100 tons of cargo. Her sternwheel was 18 feet long with a 15-foot diameter. Her two engines had 12-inch diameter steam cylinders with a six-foot stroke, ran at 160 horsepower with two boilers, and could make 13 mph against the river's current. She had two cabins on her upper deck, one located forward and the other aft, accommodating 150 passengers. Her lower deck area would hold as many people as could fit into the space. Her pilothouse was located above it all, forward and attached to the upper deck's roof. Her first crew consisted of Captain Fred W. Bonness,

Mate John Campbell, Clerk James Gibson, Pilot John Lyons, and Engineer A. Storer (*Aitkin Age* 1884a, 1884c, 1886t; Hart 1952, 12).



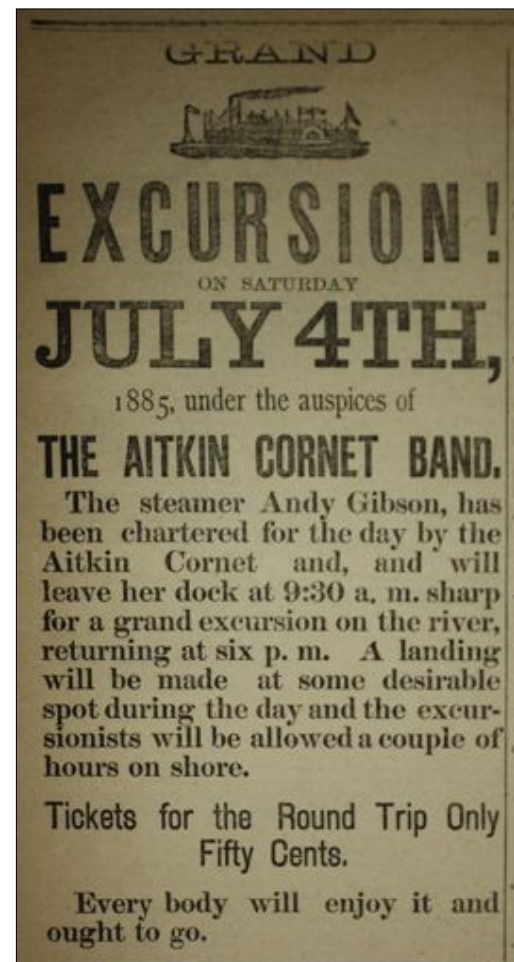
Andy Gibson moored on the Mississippi River with a wanigan tilted on shore behind her.
Courtesy of the Itasca County Historical Society.

During her first year of operation, *Andy Gibson* scheduled packet service between Aitkin and Grand Rapids every Tuesday morning. To increase their passenger business, E. B. Lowell and Co. offered reduced rates for settlers looking to purchase land on the river. Business was not brisk enough for the *Andy Gibson* to make the scheduled weekly Aitkin-Grand Rapids round trips during May and June of 1884. To offset these slow times, the steamer offered pleasure excursions on the Mississippi River for the entertainment and recreation of Aitkin's residents. The first excursion was a trip 24 miles upriver to a point near the ranch of *Andy Gibson's* pilot, John Lyon. This trip gave Aitkin residents a chance to see the new steamer inside and out, as well as explore the upper river and cool off from the reported excessive heat. On Sunday 22 June 1884, *Andy Gibson* took excursionists on an all-day trip upriver, with several stops made along the way to Bear Portage, where dinner was served. Later that summer, when the river water rose, the steamer commenced carrying freight and passengers to Grand Rapids while

continuing with pleasure excursions when possible. One pleasure trip headed downriver to Pine Knoll, which provided a change of scenery for 100 of Aitkin's citizens, while another 'moonlight' excursion carried along Aitkin's newly-formed music band for entertainment and dancing. *Andy Gibson* also promoted tourist excursions from Aitkin to Grand Rapids with a one-day layover given to passengers to visit Pokegama Falls and the government construction of the dam going on there. It was also noted that Captain Bonness's son, Fred, Jr., signed on to *Andy Gibson* in order to learn steamboating from his father (Aitkin Age 1884b, 1884d-m).

Andy Gibson's presence and her obvious size, was reflected in the amount of cargo carried in 1884 compared to previous years. *City of Aitkin* went out of service in 1883, so only *Andy Gibson* and the smaller *Fawn* operated between Aitkin and Grand Rapids. During 1884, 8,000 tons of cargo and 1,346 passengers were carried on these two steamers and their barges (when towed behind them), regardless of the slow periods of commerce (U.S. House of Representatives 1889, 1791).

The 1885 river transportation season began for *Andy Gibson* on 30 April, when she left for Grand Rapids with the same crew as her previous season with a heavy cargo and many passengers. Throughout May, June, and July, reports of the steamer's transportation of passengers, commercial moving of cargo and logging company driving crews and supplies, and excursion travel not only between Aitkin and Grand Rapids, but across Sandy Lake as well. Often during excursions, the steamer would stop at different homesteads where the landowners would host a party for the passengers, and on the 4th of July, the Aitkin Cornet Band chartered *Andy Gibson* and charged a fee to take a ride and listen to their music. The Brainerd Band got in on the action as well, taking an excursion to Sandy Lake and playing for a group of ladies. Also during this season, *Andy Gibson* and *Fawn*, led by Captain Fred Bonness and Captain Christopher Columbus Sutton, engaged in a 'Great Race', each trying to better the other's travel time from Aitkin to Grand Rapids and back. Firstly *Fawn* recorded a 46 hour round trip, then *Andy Gibson* did 37 hours, and *Fawn* then recorded two 36 hour runs. The latter part of the 1885 season saw some exceedingly large cargoes being carried by *Andy Gibson*, including a record of over 160 tons of lumberman's supplies and 50 passengers. She drew 25 inches



Although the graphic is not a sternwheeler, this *Andy Gibson* 4th of July excursion ad was successful (Aitkin Age, 20 June 1885).

of water during the voyage – one inch more than normal – but made the trip without incident. *Andy Gibson* bested this freight amount two more times that season, taking another 160-plus cargo, then a 170 ton freight and 107 passengers, described by the local press as a “mammoth load of freight and passengers.” Steamboat transportation and commerce extended into November during the 1885 season due to warm weather and lack of ice. *Andy Gibson* left Aitkin for Grand Rapids on 7 November on her last run of the season, returning some days later (*Aitkin Age* 1885a-q). Between the *Andy Gibson*, *Fawn*, and the barges they may have towed, 2,500 tons of freight and 2,400 passengers were carried on the stretch of the Mississippi River between Aitkin, Sandy Lake, and Grand Rapids in 1885 (U.S. House of Representatives 1889, 1791).

The 1886 steamboating season on the Upper Mississippi River saw a newly remodeled *Fawn*. Owner Captain C.C. Sutton cut her in two lengthwise from bow to stern and widened the boat by five feet. The *Fawn* was also lengthened by 10 feet. These changes reduced her draft to 12 inches, and her new ‘elegant’ cabin was designed to carry 70 passengers. The re-model was designed to increase her carrying capacity and speed that will “enable her to come in for her share of the trade.” Ironically, near the beginning of the season, E. B. Lowell and Co. purchased the *Fawn*, thus monopolizing the steamer trade between Aitkin and Grand Rapids for the majority of the navigation season. Captain Sutton apparently became a partner in the Lowell Co. and remained at the helm of the *Fawn*. *Andy Gibson*’s mate, James Gibson, took over running the transportation division of the Lowell Co. and took the helm of *Andy Gibson* this season. Captain Bonness was a noted passenger on board *Andy Gibson* several times during the season, however. Like previous years, *Andy Gibson* engaged in commerce, transportation, and pleasure trips, carrying freight, passengers, and excursionists between Aitkin, Grand Rapids, and Sandy Lake, while also taking private contracts with logging companies such as Beade & Bray to tow logs across Sandy Lake to Sandy River and into the Mississippi. During one moonlight excursion, a safety plug blew on *Andy Gibson*’s boiler, causing a lot of noise and a bit of alarm. After fixing the problem, Captain Gibson ultimately fired the sternwheeler’s engineer who was responsible for the boiler malfunction. Low river water was an issue in late July 1886, and the local press made a wry comment that “unless the government dams are soon opened they will have to put the *Andy Gibson* on wheels.” On 24 August 1886, *Andy Gibson* broke her wheel shaft near Scott’s Meadow, upriver from Aitkin approximately 40 miles, and her sternwheel dropped into the Mississippi. Crewmen went back to Aitkin – how they got there is unknown – and brought the *Fawn* up to relieve her of her freight and passengers. Engineer William Hay set out for Stillwater to oversee the manufacturing of a new wheel shaft, returning with the equipment on 19 September. Hay promptly attached the *Andy Gibson*’s new wheel shaft and wheel so that she could commence commercial operations. (*Aitkin Age* 1885r, 1886a-m)

Meanwhile, the Mississippi River Transportation Company (also known as W.E. Neal & Co. of Grant Rapids, principals W.E. Neal of Grand Rapids and W.H. Eustis of Minneapolis) purchased the abandoned steamer *City of Aitkin* from Captain George Houghton. The boat’s former engineer, A.A. Storer, was hired to restore her to working condition. Storer found her hull to be in excellent condition, while he re-built her

superstructure and fitted her with new machinery manufactured by D.M. Swain of Stillwater, delivered by the railroad in late July. The reconstructed steamer measured 115 feet long, 21 feet in the beam, a 14 inch draft, and could carry 100 tons of cargo. Initially referred to as *Aitkin City*, she was launched on 1 September by her old captain and first builder, Captain George Houghton. She took her first trip to Grand Rapids on 7 September, returning on 10 September. By mid-October, the steamer was no longer referred to as *Aitkin City*, but was now the *George H. Houghton*. *Andy Gibson* was back in service on September 28, and there was enough business for all three steamers that fall, carrying winter supplies, several hundred men, and heads of cattle to the lumber camps further north. Navigation closed for the season on 13 November, with *George H. Houghton* getting caught in the ice above Crooked Rapids for the winter, trying to make one too many runs in 1886 (*Aitkin Age* 1886n-v, 1887b). In 1886, the three Headwaters Mississippi steamers carried 1,500 tons of freight and 3,500 passengers (U.S. House of Representatives 1889, 1791).

In 1887, *Andy Gibson* had a new captain, Lee West, and clerk, Hans Haugen. The Lowell Co. sold the *Fawn* to G.W. Knox. Captain Sutton left the Lowell Co. and remained at the helm of the steamer, with G.W. Knox sharing captaining duties at times. The local press made note that having three steamboat companies (*Andy Gibson*, *Fawn*, *George H. Houghton*) in competition was good for the Upper Mississippi River trade and to prevent the monopolization of commerce. Low water in late April prevented *Andy Gibson* from making it more than 50 miles above Aitkin, near Portage City, and affected the other steamers as well. In May and June, the low water conditions adversely affected the logging runs and the river was jammed with logs for miles, preventing commerce on the river. One 50-mile long jam that clogged the Willow River at its mouth with the Mississippi kept the *Fawn* away from Aitkin for over five weeks. It wasn't until 29 June that regular steamboat traffic could commence. *Andy Gibson* conducted weekly trips to Grand Rapids throughout July and ran a moonlight excursion in early August. August commerce appears to have been slow, but she made trips to Grand Rapids throughout September with the exception of the second week when the crew of the *Andy Gibson* (Heman Moork, John Lyon, Lee West, Hans Haugen) traveled to Minneapolis for the Industrial Exposition. *Andy Gibson's* last trip of 1887 was captained by James Gibson, since Captain West took ill (*Aitkin Age* 1887a-o). Even with the truncated shipping season due to immense logjams, the three Aitkin steamers carried 1,505 tons of freight and 2,884 passengers on the river in 1887 (U.S. House of Representatives 1889, 1791).

The 1888 steamboating season saw the *Fawn* enlarged once more, and *Andy Gibson* leaving for Grand Rapids during the first week of May. She could not, however, get back to Aitkin for a few extra days, as a logjam stopped her four miles outside of town. *Andy Gibson* was contracted to tow logs across Sandy Lake beginning 21 May, returning on 14 June with about 100 logging men from the Swan River logging camps. She left again on 15 June to continue her work towing logs at Sandy Lake, but arrived back in Aitkin on 22 June with 40-50 people. She had to discontinue her work at the lake because of high water, but returned there at the end of June, not returning until 25 July. By early August, *Andy Gibson* joined the *Fawn* and *George H. Houghton* in transportation and

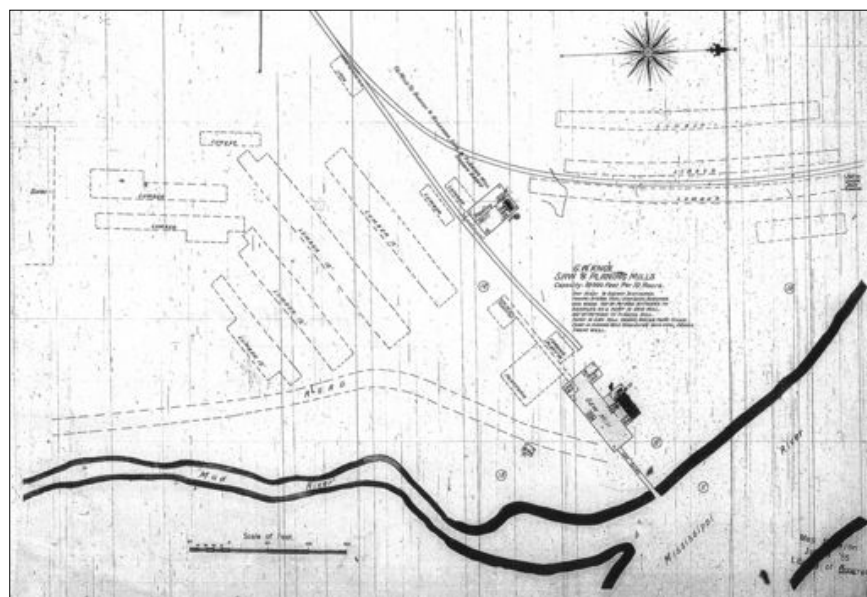
commerce between Aitkin and Grand Rapids. On a trip to Grand Rapids, her passenger John Ferguson fell overboard and drowned near Bear Portage. His body was found about on 10 August below *Andy Gibson's* mooring place in Aitkin, stuck amongst a logjam. On August 24, *Andy Gibson* undertook another moonlight excursion, carrying 60 people on a dancing cruise, and throughout September, regular trips were made to Grand Rapids. Details are sketchy concerning October steamboating, but business was brisk, and the shipping season lasted until mid-November. Once again, *George H. Houghton* attempted a 'too-late-in-the-season-run' and was stuck in ice near John Clark's Landing for the winter. Her perishable cargo was placed in Clark's cellar for safekeeping (*Aitkin Age* 1888a-o). Aitkin's three steamers carried a combined 2,660 tons of freight and 2,860 passengers on the Mississippi River during 1888 (U.S. House of Representatives 1889, 1791).

On 26 March 1889, the steamer *George H. Houghton*, still moored near John Clark's Landing 20 miles north of Aitkin, burned to her waterline and sank. Her owners were listed as Wright Mercantile Co. of Itasca, not the W.E. Neal Co.; when she was sold to Wright is unknown. It was noted that the steamboat was partially insured and that the company would build a new steamer that season. It was also suspected that the vessel was a victim of arson (*Aitkin Age* 1889a).

Instead of building a new steamboat, Wright Mercantile Co. purchased the *Andy Gibson* from E.B. Lowell and Co. much to the chagrin of 'Commodore' E.B. Lowell. The *Andy Gibson's* crew for the 1889 season was comprised of Captain Lee West, Pilot John Lyons, Clerk W.R. Tucker, and Engineer William Hay. The *Fawn's* crew was comprised of Captain G.W. Knox, Pilot John H. Whipple, Cook George Lydick, and Engineer Edward J. Lucia. Like the previous season, the steamboats encountered a logjam near the mouth of the Rice River in mid-May, and although commerce and pleasure excursions didn't cease, the *Andy Gibson* had problems with obstruction to navigation into early June and again in mid-July. Also in mid-July, an intoxicated passenger fell off *Andy Gibson* and drowned just below the mouth of the Sandy River. In mid-August, *Andy Gibson* broke her wrist pin and was out of commission for about a week while the part was being repaired in Brainerd. In late August, some of *Andy Gibson's* passengers were identified as men heading upriver to work on the building the Duluth and Winnipeg Railroad, and she carried a load of mules to the railroad as well. *Andy Gibson* mirrored her autumn activity from 1888, with large amounts of freight and passengers being moved upriver in mid-September. *Andy Gibson's* season ended by 9 November, and she spent the winter laid up in Itasca for winter over-haul and repair. An interesting series of public notices were put into the local press that winter and spring by W.R. Tucker requesting that "those having accounts with the *Andy Gibson* will please call at the *Age* office and settle, either by note or cash." Some accounts were still open in mid-April 1890 when Tucker requested that debtors come to the Aitkin courthouse to pay their bills (*Aitkin Age* 1889b-p, 1890a-c). *Andy Gibson* and *Fawn*, along with the associated barges, carried 3,500 tons of freight and 5,250 passengers in 1889. An interesting report from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the agency responsible for river improvements, commented *Andy Gibson's* unusual size. It stated that "caving of the banks in many places was also due to the powerful wheel of the steamer *Andy*

Gibson, which carries passengers, freight, and supplies for the lumberman's camps and settlements, the steamer being too long over all for the narrow widths and sharp bends which occur on this part of the stream" (U.S. House of Representatives 1889, 1788-1789; 1890, 2079-2080).

In mid-May 1890, an erroneous report in the local press proclaimed "a rumor was current on our streets yesterday afternoon that the steamer *Andy Gibson* had exploded her boiler in Sandy Lake, and several lives were lost, but up to the time of going to press the rumor had not been verified." In an extensive search of the newspaper, no retraction was ever found and it was confirmed that the steamer was still in one piece when she was listed for sale on 31 May 1890. It is apparent that *Andy Gibson* did not participate in any commercial enterprises at the beginning of the 1890 steamboating season possibly because she was laid-up for repairs. She would have had difficulty navigating the river in any case since a 10-mile logjam filled the river for 10 days in late May and early June, hindering commerce for *Fawn*. In mid-July, the Wright Mercantile Co. put out another call for accounts with the steamer be settled with William R. Tucker at the courthouse, or the company would involve the law in collecting their money. In early September 1890, while returning from Sandy Lake, a hole was punched into the side of *Andy Gibson*, and "the heroic work of her crew saved her from sinking." The last mention of *Andy Gibson* running on the river in 1890 was her return to Aitkin on 10 October. In addition, reference to "the spur track to the red mill and the old steamboat landing" being completed and *Andy Gibson* "at her old dock near the red mill" are interesting. The red mill was the G.W. Knox sawmill and was located on the south bank of the Mississippi just west of the mouth of the Ripple (Mud) River. It can be inferred that for part of her working life, *Andy Gibson* moored at the 'old steamboat landing' but from 1891, she moored at Potter's Landing, where the *Andy Gibson* Wreck Site is located, about two miles downriver (*Aitkin Age* 1890d-i; Knox 1960, 16).



A Sanborn Map from 1892 depicting 'the red mill' just west of the Ripple (Mud) River mouth.

On 4 April 1891, the local newspaper reported the sale of *Andy Gibson*, 11 months after she was offered for sale. Warren Potter of Aitkin bought the steamboat and was overhauling the vessel in Grand Rapids for river service. By 16 May, *Andy Gibson* was in operating condition and on her way from Grand Rapids to Aitkin when she got stuck in a large logjam of cut cedar timber. She was still in that jam on 23 May, and *Fawn* was docked in Grand Rapids under-going repairs for the last two weeks of May, leaving Aitkin with no water transportation for most of the month. Both steamers finally reached Aitkin during the week of 24 May and both loaded freight and passengers before 30 May for a return trip to Grand Rapids. When *Andy Gibson* returned to Aitkin in mid-June, it was determined she would cease her river operations due to danger presented by a vast number of logs clogging the river. The amount of commerce engaged in by *Andy Gibson* during the latter half of June and through most of July is unknown. Captain George Houghton took the helm of *Andy Gibson* on 25 July to fulfill a two-month contract with the Federal Government to remove snags from the Mississippi River between Aitkin and Grand Rapids. While this is not the only time the steamer removed obstructions from the river channel since her crew took it upon themselves to clear the river of snags and fallen trees in 1885, it appears this was the first time she conducted the work under an official contract and with pay. *Andy Gibson* was reported at her dock in Grand Rapids during the snagging operations, and the local press declared "it looked like old times to see the *Andy Gibson* steaming up to her dock Monday [July 27]. She is engaged in snagging the river between here and Aitkin." During *Andy Gibson's* snagging operations, the crew brought the steamer into Aitkin to take on George N. Houghton, son of Captain Houghton, as a new crewman as well as supplies. *Andy Gibson* had resumed operations to Grand Rapids, arriving there on 3 October and throughout the month, continuing into early November. The steamer was expected to spend the winter months in Grand Rapids, the trip upriver facilitated by a release of water from the Pokegama reservoir to raise the Mississippi River water level. However, the river did not rise as anticipated and the river became iced-in quickly, and *Andy Gibson* stayed in Aitkin (*Aitkin Age* 1885k, 4 April 1891a-h, 1891j-o; *Grand Rapids Magnet* 1891a-c).

In autumn 1891, Warren Potter brought a case against lumberman Jess B. Chatterton related to the log clogging the Mississippi River that resulted in a loss of income for Mr. Potter. The local press reprinted the story from the Minneapolis Tribune. It read in part: "It is claimed that since the extension of the Mississippi and Rum River boom to Brainerd the lumbermen do not rush their logs through during high water, but allow them to remain in the main river until the logs from the small streams are all in and make one clean drive. The result of this has been to almost render the river impassable for any purpose, and it is of this that the steamboat owners complain." Potter claimed a loss of \$1,648. Potter argued his case in mid-December in Hennepin County District Court and the jury voted ten to two in his favor (*Aitkin Age* 1891i, 1891p-q).

The 1892 Mississippi River commercial and transportation season began for *Andy Gibson* on 23 April when she headed on a rare trip downriver below Aitkin to pick up some large sawmill equipment for the firm of Burton & Anderson for transport to Aitkin. This business was setting up on the site of the 'old Knox mill property' at the confluence

of the Ripple (Mud) and Mississippi Rivers. *Andy Gibson's* departure from her Aitkin landing was an adventure, "and everybody on board held his breath as the boat majestically swung into mid stream and started down river" with W. Potter acting as pilot. The powerful sternwheel pushed the bow into the north riverbank and they had to back-up to get her dislodged. Then, the steamboat got stuck on a logging boom and "balanced gracefully on a boom-stick." The crew tied a line at the north side of the river to pull the boat back into the water and eventually they continued downriver. The crew successfully completed their job, returning to Aitkin with the sawmill equipment within the week. At some point in May, *Andy Gibson* was hired to tow logs across Sandy Lake in order to deposit them into the Mississippi for the run downstream and they finished before 4 June. It seems *Andy Gibson* did not complete any trips from Aitkin to Grand Rapids until her arrival in the Grand Rapids on 22 October, after five days of travel. The sparse travel between the two cities was confirmed in the local press when she "started on her second trip to Grand Rapids on Tuesday evening [1 November], loaded to her fullest capacity, and that means much." She returned to Aitkin on 7 November and ceased operations for the winter, moored at her landing (*Aitkin Age* 1892a-e; *Grand Rapids Magnet* 1892).

In late February and early March, it was reported "Contractor D.M. Falconer is building a sort of dry dock for the steamer *Andy Gibson*. The object of the contrivance is to obviate the necessity of the pump going all summer to keep the hold baled out" (*Aitkin Age* 1894). Even though *Andy Gibson* was no longer in the transportation business, conducting commerce, or giving pleasure excursions, she needed to remain afloat. Whether Potter was planning to put the steamer back in service is unknown, but MHM suspects that if the steamer was allowed to keel over into the river, she would create a large obstruction that he would be responsible for clearing. Building the dry dock cradle was a simple solution, particularly since Potter was stripping the steamboat of useable items and keeping her above water was paramount. It was noted in 1899 that "the boilers to be used in furnishing the heat for W. Potter and Co.'s new building were placed on Tuesday. They were formerly used to furnish the propelling power for the *Andy Gibson*" (*Aitkin Republican* 1899). In 1906, "the old river steamer *Andy Gibson*, long since out of commission, was a giant in her day and while well remembered by the old residents of Aitkin and Grand Rapids was supposed to have been heard of for the last time as far as future usefulness is concerned. This however is not entirely correct as the remaining castings and machinery have been bought and shipped to Bena where a large new steamer will be built to ply the waters of Lake Winnibigoshish. G.E. Godfrey of Ball Club has been here during the past week loading the car with the machinery which was bought from the Potter-Casey Co" (*Aitkin Age* 1906).

***Andy Gibson* Wreck Site Significance**

Andy Gibson is unique in Minnesota's maritime history in that her traditional construction – meaning she was built probably without blueprints by the people of Aitkin, MN – reflected the constraints placed on watercraft of the Headwaters Mississippi River region. And yet she was, in the terms of other steamers, very long. Her shallow 2-foot draft was indicative of successful Headwaters Mississippi River steamboats; the early

vessels that couldn't navigate the often shallow waters without grounding were not successful and were either re-built or moved to another body of water. While her 32-foot beam was exceptional even without being a side-wheeler, it was not unreasonable to effective navigation of the Mississippi River in Aitkin and Itasca Counties. Her length, at 130 feet¹, could often be prohibitive, and the reports of her caving in the riverbanks through striking them is not surprising. However, her length and beam also allowed her to be a significant force in facilitating commerce and the transportation of people on the river, with a capacity that was unparalleled in Headwaters Mississippi maritime history.

Specifically in terms of commerce and transportation, it was reported that at the beginning of her career, *Andy Gibson* could carry 100 tons of cargo and 150 passengers. Later in her career, she transported cargoes up to 160 tons without incident. A clearer impact of *Andy Gibson's* commercial career will be known once her four known log books housed at the Aitkin County Historical Society (ACHS) – a combination of passenger and cargo logs – are digitized and studied. *Andy Gibson* provided a crucial service to the people of Minnesota, facilitating the movement of goods and people on a stretch of the Mississippi River at a time when roads between Aitkin, Sandy Lake, and Grand Rapids were either crude or non-existent. Further, no direct railroad route to the upriver settlements existed.

The entertainment and recreation aspect of *Andy Gibson's* history may initially seem obscure, but when a cargo wasn't to be had, the steamer's owners saw fit to use their cargo-carrier to provide excursions to the citizens of Aitkin, many of whom did not otherwise get the opportunity to enjoy the Mississippi River. Allowing band music, dancing, and food service on the steamboat also helped the economy of the area, and kept the steamboatmen working during slow times.

In terms of steamboat construction, the archaeological remains of *Andy Gibson* show that the wreck exhibits the structural components that are typically found in a river steamer. Her intact starboard gunwale *in situ* and the associated construction components that have survived – including the elegant rub rail with a finely carved rounded trim, clamp, futtocks, deck beams, and deck planking, as well as uniform floors, strakes, stringers, cylinder timbers, cylinder timber supporting rods, cylinder timber braces, balanced rudders – indicate that although *Andy Gibson* was probably built without plans, her builders knew how to properly construct a shallow-draft river steamer.

Archaeologically speaking, *Andy Gibson* is one of two known sternwheel steamer wreck sites in Minnesota's section of the Mississippi River – the other is *Swan* downriver about 2 miles. She is the most complete example of a Mississippi River steamer known to

¹One unsubstantiated and often repeated claim about the *Andy Gibson* is that 'at some point' in her career she was lengthened to 140 feet from 130 feet. No documentation has been found to confirm this assertion. The wreck site itself can possibly answer this question, once it is fully documented. However, the statute length (the distance between the stempost and sternpost) and the actual length (the distance between the stempost and the end of the cylinder timber) of a steamboat are two different things; we don't know which length any of the 'lengthening' claims refer to, much less the published length of the steamer in 1884. Also, the actual length does not take into account one-quarter of the paddlewheel, since the cylinder timber doesn't extend to the aft-most part of the wheel.

exist in the country – her aforementioned intact gunwale is unique. The site itself is one-of-a-kind, providing interesting nautical and ‘dry’ nautical archaeological challenges. Since it is confirmed that the starboard gunwale is intact in the riverbank, with several feet of dirt and flora above it, and the wreck extends into the river channel, any excavation and documentation of this site encompasses the disciplines of terrestrial archaeology, maritime archaeology dry nautical archaeology, underwater archaeology, and nautical archaeology. Terrestrial archaeological equipment has been used to excavate portions of the starboard gunwale, in conjunction with using the river water to rinse mud off of structural components and nautical archaeological recording of the remains. During low water conditions when the wreck is partially exposed, maritime archaeological study of the dry dock cradle is combined with nautical archaeological documentation of the expose hull components. On the portions of the wreck that are usually always submerged, underwater and nautical archaeological equipment will be used including SCUBA, underwater cameras, illumination, and triangulation.

During her working career of eight years, *Andy Gibson* affected the lives of the people of Aitkin, Sandy Lake, Grand Rapids, and all the points in-between by providing a crucial line of communication, commerce, and transportation in an area without direct railroad lines or good roads. It was recalled that if something needed to be moved after the river froze, it would have to go up north on what was called “the ‘State Road’ which at best couldn’t be called good. The road was generally muddy to very muddy and passed through swampy areas where it had to be heavily “corduroyed” (Knox 1960, 16). She also provided respite from summer heat in the form of pleasure excursions and entertainment in the form of dancing parties. The extent of the archaeological remains of the *Andy Gibson* Wreck Site, including the dry dock cradle, that have survived through intentional destruction by looting, nearly 120 years of water, ice, and silt erosion, is remarkable. The nature of this site – as a dry nautical and nautical site that incorporates a contemporary dry dock cradle of a type that exists nowhere else – provides unique opportunities to study a vessel type that facilitated the movement of freight, passengers, and information in Aitkin and Itasca Counties during the late 19th Century in Minnesota.

The *Andy Gibson* Wreck Site

The *Andy Gibson* Wreck Site is located in the USGS Aitkin Quadrangle at Range T 47 N R 27 W, Section 23 NE 1/4, SW 1/4, and the approximate center of the site lies at 46 32.412 n 093 43.024 w. The site consists of the wreck of the sternwheel steamer *Andy Gibson* that rests on top of a cradle that served as a dry dock. While the steamer is fragmented, the site has remained within the same area since the steamer was abandoned. A portion of the wreck is anchored in place because it is imbedded in the riverbank, although structural components have been washed away by river currents, ice, moving obstructions such as trees and logs, and looting.

According to newspaper reports, *Andy Gibson* finished her last trip on the Mississippi River from Aitkin to Grand Rapids, MN on 24 October 1892 (*Grand Rapids Magnet* 1892). However, she must have taken at least one more trip downriver back to Aitkin,

since she was left at her Potter's Landing mooring there prior to early March 1894. At this time, in an attempt to insure the steamboat's structural integrity, her owner Warren Potter hired D. M. Falconer to construct a cradle for the boat that would act as a dry dock during low water conditions. According to the newspaper, "the object of the contrivance is to obviate the necessity of the pump going all summer to keep the hold baled out" (*Aitkin Age* 1894). This statement indicates Potter did not want the steamboat to founder in low water; whether this suggests the vessel was still operating is unknown. In 1899 her boilers were removed for use in Warren Potter's new store (*Aitkin Republican* 1899) and in early January 1906, it was reported that although the steamer was "long since out of commission...[and] was supposed to have been heard of for the last time as far as future usefulness is concerned...[her] remaining castings and machinery have been bought and shipped to Bena where a large new steamer will be built to ply the waters of Lake Winnibigoshish" (*Aitkin Age* 1906). Since the removal of the machinery and boilers would require the dismantling of the boat's superstructure, it can be assumed the upper portions of the steamer were removed by 1899 and possibly earlier.

Periodically throughout the 20th Century, the *Andy Gibson* wreck has been exposed during low water conditions and observed by the citizens of Aitkin. In September 1967 the ACHS conducted a survey of the wreck and produced numerous photographs. The photographs show many nautical structural components:

- **keelson:** the centerline longitudinal timber attached to the keel plank [the main longitudinal structural timber that acts as the vessel's 'backbone'] to increase the hull's strength at the stern
- **cylinder timbers:** large timbers on starboard and port that supported the stern wheel with metal cylinder timber supporting rods evident
- **cylinder timber braces:** short timbers holding the two beams of the cylinder timbers together
- **rudders:** three balanced rudders where 1/3 of its area lies forward of the pivot point - master (center), port (slave), starboard (slave) with associated sternposts, gudgeons (metal attachment straps), rods (metal connectors), and pintles (metal rods used as pivot points)
 - **master rudder skeg:** deadwood used to protect rudders and for added strength
 - **longitudinal stringers:** timbers attached to floors for strength
 - **floors:** athwartships frames attached to the hull's bottom
 - **gunwale:** starboard top edge of the vessel's side extending out of the riverbank at the wreck's bow

The port side of the wreck had begun to break off from the remainder of the hull and tip into the river channel. After the photographs were taken (but before a newspaper article on the activities of ACHS appeared), looters removed the master and port side rudders. It seems the ACHS had planned to conserve and display the rudders (*Aitkin Independent Age* 1967), but their current location is unknown.



Views of the 1967 ACHS investigation of the *Andy Gibson* Wreck Site with the three rudders *in situ* and the cylinder timbers and keelson exposed. Courtesy of the Aitkin County Historical Society.



Tony Klee of the ACHS examining the starboard cylinder timber of *Andy Gibson* during low water conditions in 1967. The cylinder timber supporting rods just aft are seen just forward, protruding through the tops of the cylinder timbers. Courtesy of the ACHS.

The *Andy Gibson* wreck was also exposed in 1977, 1988, 1998, 2006, (Pettersen 2006, 8), 2008, and 2009. Photographs acquired from the ACHS of an unknown date, but probably taken in 1977, show the port and master rudders piled in a heap on the riverbank. The starboard cylinder timber is seen leaning toward the water and lodged next to the remaining starboard rudder and sternpost. Another view of the cylinder timber further forward shows it extremely degraded with parts of it missing, and deformed cylinder timber supporting rods when compared to the 1967 photographs. These images also show the starboard floors, stringers, and some strakes (outer hull planking). The port side had broken off from the rest of the wreck and had slipped further into the river channel. A 1988 photograph provides a helpful over-all view of the wreck site from the north riverbank. Generally what can be discerned are the wreck's starboard side floors, stringers, and strakes emerging from the riverbank and into the channel, and at least three cradle pilings protruding above the water. One significant aspect of this photograph is a view of the intact bow area that, in 1988, was close in to the riverbank. The riverbank has eroded away to a great degree in this area, causing

the channel to widen a bit, and it is hoped the bow is simply under a layer of silt further in the river channel (*Aitkin Independent Age*, 1988).



Views of the *Andy Gibson* Wreck Site, probably from 1977. Note the port and master rudders discarded on the riverbank after their removal sometime in 1967. Courtesy of the ACHS.

Overview of the site during the week of 20 July 1988 during low water conditions.

Aitkin Age, 20 July 1988



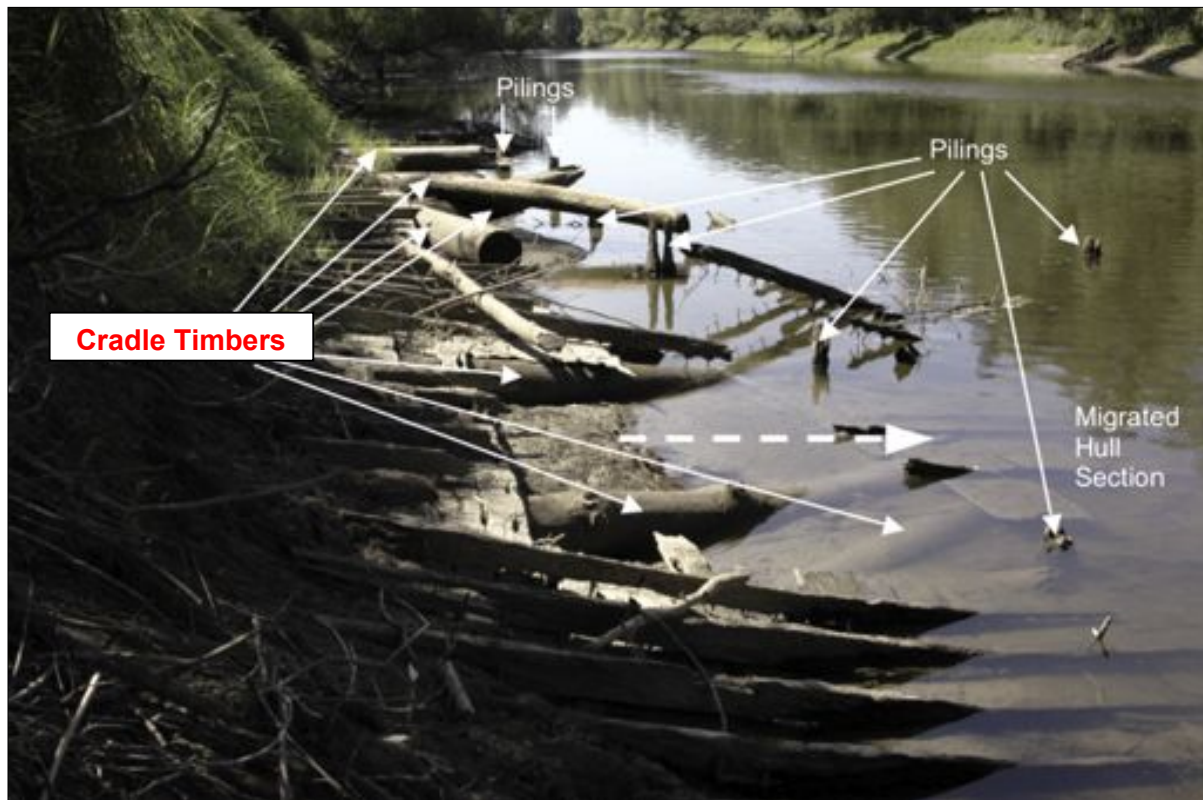
Confirmed looting also occurred on the *Andy Gibson* wreck in August 2006. Photographs taken in August 2006 during low water conditions indicate the starboard rudder was still in place and an area about 25 feet forward of the stern was intact. Photographs taken in September 2006 show the starboard rudder was cut off the wreck by a souvenir hunter in August or September. Also during this time period, a section of the hull was removed by a chainsaw. The person who removed the rudder was required to conserve the artifact and present it to the ACHS.



The starboard slave rudder *in situ* in early August 2008 (courtesy of Connie Pettersen) and the same stern area later that month, after the rudder was looted. A section of hull was cut out of the wreck amidships as seen in the bottom left photograph. Courtesy of David Mather.

Documentation by MHM in August 2008 recorded the presence of starboard strakes, floors with iron fasteners protruding from them, stringers, large bolt fasteners with washers, and three wooden blocks attached to the strakes that possibly represent a hull repair. Possible outriggers (deck beams used to hold up a sponson [part of the deck that overhangs the boats side]) protrude from the riverbank in the area where the cylinder timber supporting rods project from the riverbank. The majority of the port side had broken free of the starboard section and lay on a slope into the river channel. The cradle that served as a dry dock constructed in 1894 was clearly visible in many areas, broken through the bottom of the wreck as it settled into the riverbed's silt over the decades. Eight wooden pilings protruded through the wreck's bottom, essentially impaling it approximately along its centerline as evidenced by the dislodged keelson at

the bow near one of these supports. An additional three pilings evident in deeper water, supposedly on the wreck's port side, are possibly protruding through the wreck as well. Several large timbers rest under the hull in line with the eight pilings, although some have been dislodged over the years and lie haphazardly under the wreck. The presence of this structure confirms that D.M. Falconer constructed it at the request of Warren Potter in 1894. Mississippi River steamers grounding at their moorings due to low water was not unknown. Steamer *City of Aitkin* sank at her moorings in October 1883 when she hit bottom and began to list. She was raised, repaired, and re-entered river service within weeks. However, within two weeks of her return to service, she had to off-load a heavy cargo to the smaller steamer *Fawn*, a vessel with a lighter draft, so that the goods could reach Grand Rapids from Aitkin (*Aitkin Age* 1883a-b, 1894). It seems Warren Potter learned from this example and in the end, created a unique archaeological site. The existence of the cradle increases the complexity, significance, and remarkable nature of this site, adding a stratigraphic layer not previously anticipated. Further, a large piling is imbedded into the riverbank higher on the river's bluff, a remnant of the steamer's original mooring place.



An overview of the *Andy Gibson* wreck in late August 2008 during low water conditions. The 'dry dock' cradle is easily seen, having broken through the wreck's bottom and its support pilings are seen separated from the supporting timbers. Courtesy of Kelly Nehowig.

As previously mentioned, in addition to the stern damage caused by the removal of the starboard rudder in 2006, it is also evident that a significant amount of intentional damage was inflicted on the wreck amidships by a souvenir hunter. As documented in

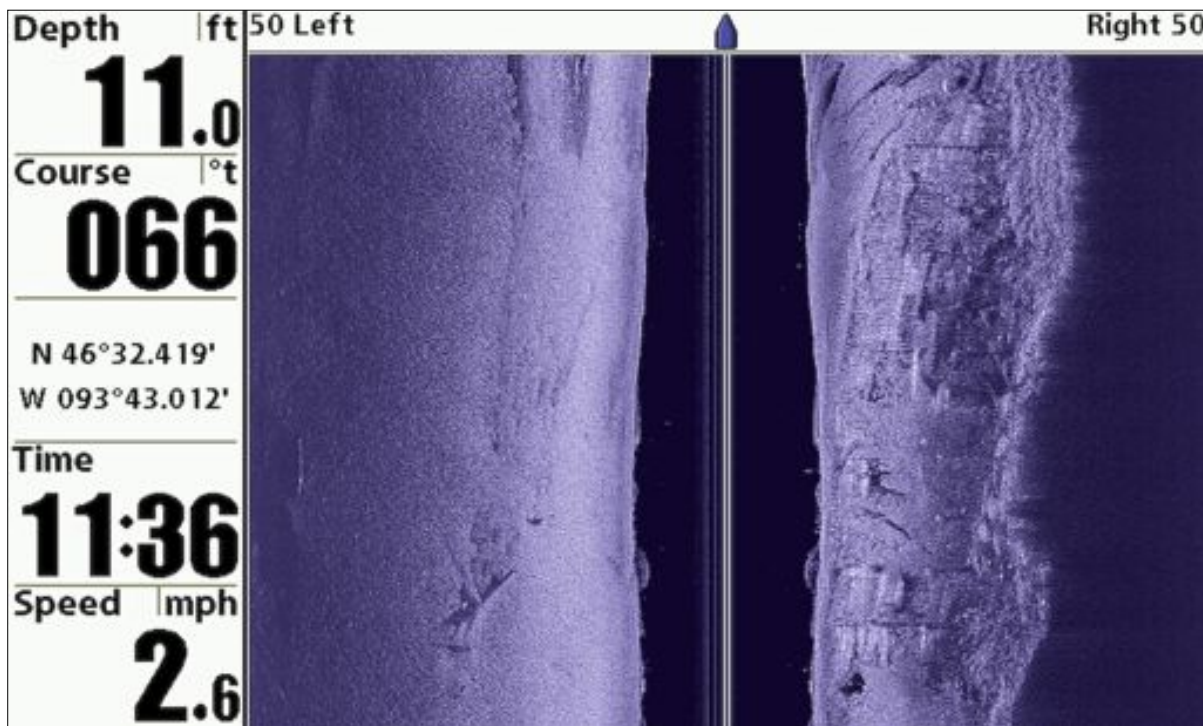
2008, five floors extending out from the riverbank exhibit squared saw-cut ends. Additionally, an undetermined number of floors are missing forward of the cut examples. It is unknown if these floors were looted from the wreck or if they fell victim to ice and water action. This area is now unstable because of the looting of the aft section and the area where the hull was removed is quickly eroding. One amidships section has migrated from the main wreck and slipped into the river that resembles the looted area of the hull. This hull piece is intact approximately five feet further down the river's slope and consists of several strakes and floors.

MHM further documented the wreck site in September 2009, again during low water conditions. It was determined that the wreck site is approximately 125 long and 45 feet wide, the width estimated from where the gunwale was suspected to be imbedded in the riverbank under several feet of dirt to where the port side had slid into the river channel. The floors measure 3.0 inches sided (wide), 4.5 inches molded (deep). At the stern, distance between floors from the center of one floor to the center of the next is 15.6 inches; after the 10th floor from the stern, the spacing is 12 inches center to center. The cylinder timber support rods and possible outrigger remain *in situ*. Near the bow there are three 'repair' blocks measure 7.3 inches wide by 25 inches long and are fastened to the strakes by 6 bolts with washers, three at each end offset in a triangle shape. More cradle support pilings were evident in 2009 compared to 2008 due to lower water, and at least 11 protrude through the hull starboard or amidships, with another two evident in the river channel. Eight cradle timbers could be seen protruding from under the hull, exposed due to the fact that the port side of the wreck has mostly migrated down a slope into the river. Some of the timbers have shifted and one crosses over another.



Andy Gibson in September 2009.

In August 2010, MHM conducted a side-imaging sonar survey of the Mississippi River in Aitkin County. Included in this section of the river is the *Andy Gibson* Wreck Site. Summer long high water conditions allowed the recording of several sonar images that encompassed the entire part of the wreck site that is not imbedded in the dry riverbank. These images show that MHM's approximations as to the site's size are accurate, and it is evident that the port side cylinder timber probably still lies in the river channel. Further, the port side gunwale likely survives, flattened out by decades of sliding down the slope of the riverbed.



A sonar image of *Andy Gibson* in August 2010 during relatively high water conditions taken during MHM's Mississippi River Aitkin County Survey.

2010 *Andy Gibson* Excavation

During the last two weeks of October 2010, MHM conducted an excavation of the riverbank where we hypothesized the starboard gunwale of the *Andy Gibson* wreck would be located if it had survived. This 'dry' nautical excavation was undertaken during relatively high water conditions. Three trenches were opened, two aft of amidships and one forward, and they extended below the river water level. MHM located the starboard side gunwale exactly where it was hypothesized to be – intact – in all three trenches. It is possible that it has survived along the entire length of the hull that is imbedded in the riverbank. MHM documented a number of nautical architectural components during this excavation: deck beams, deck planks, futtocks (inner athwartships structural beams that are extensions of the floors), and a clamp (a longitudinal beam attached to the inner hull for strength and support for the deck beams). The gunwale is capped by a rounded molding and bordered by a finely cut rub rail (a wooden beam attached along the outer hull at deck level designed to take stress during docking operations). The portions of the gunwale exposed in 2010 were in excellent condition with the exception of the deck planks. The deck planks, that are thinner than the other components, have weakened and formed themselves over the deck beams and futtocks beneath them after decades of water saturation. A daily accounting of the 2010 season fieldwork follows.

1 October. No excavation occurred this day, but MHM went to Aitkin to check on the river water levels. The river was very high, and the area where MHM planned to sink the

first trench was just underwater. Due to the nature of this partially dry nautical site, lower water levels were needed to excavate the riverbank; diving and nautical archaeological techniques were not an option. MHM also took the opportunity to visit the ACHS and look at the *Andy Gibson* log books and a day book of the steamer *Fawn*.

Day 1: 15 October. River water levels had fallen 14 inches in the two weeks since MHM's visit to Aitkin on 1 October. MHM chose a spot the furthest aft toward the stern as possible to place Trench 1 in order to determine if the gunwale existed as far aft as was believed. During low water conditions, deck beams can be seen protruding from the riverbank above twisted cylinder rods that also stick out of the bank underneath a cluster of small trees. There was not sufficient riverbank under the cluster to sink the trench, but MHM placed Trench 1 just forward of this area, using the small trees as a hand-hold during excavation. On this day, MHM cleared brush, roots, and loose branches from this area and began measured out a rough square within the confines of a rather large tree root and the limitations of the river's edge. Digging began and as we went, we filled sandbags with the dirt/mud that was being removed from the riverbank. The trench size at the end of the day was 2.7 by 3.2 feet and 35 sandbags were filled. Many photographs were taken, a sketch of the trench was made, and MHM made Twitter and Facebook updates later that evening. Jeanne Schram of the *Aitkin Independent Age* newspaper visited the site and asked many questions, took photos, and wrote an article on MHM's work that was published the next week (Appendix 1).



Top: The riverbank above the site and the un-touched riverbank as found prior to excavation.
Bottom: The beginnings of Trench 1 after clearing the area of brush and the sandbags.

Day 2: 16 October. Excavation of Trench 1 continued, with sandbags used to shore-up the sides. After 2.5 hours of mud removal, the water table was hit. A probe was sunk 2.5 feet into the mud at the northern (water edge) of the trench without resistance; it only went down 8 inches in the southern (landward edge). Excavation in the landward portion became a combination of mud removal and baling, and our trowels were abandoned in order not to damage whatever caused the probe's resistance. A flat wooden board about 1" thick was found. A beam with a nail sticking out of it measuring 2" by 2" was located running into the landward side of the trench. Another beam with a nail, parallel to the first and 12" away, was found to the east. A plank ran underneath these beams – deck beams – and we believed we may have located the gunwale. A sketch was created and Twitter and Facebook updates were made that evening.



Different views of Trench 1 from Day 2. The starboard side of the *Andy Gibson* wreck was found below the water table. The photograph to the left illustrates why MHM could not sink Trench 1 further toward the stern.

Day 3: October 17. Trench 1 was cleaned further and expanded landward above it; the soil matrix was thick and solid, allowing under-cutting into the riverbank. What MHM suspected to be the gunwale was actually the clamp and the gunwale itself was further landward. Other flat planks were uncovered and it was determined they were deck planking. MHM did expect to find intact deck planks or a clamp, and their discovery was exciting. The deck planks have suffered from repeated water-logging over the decades and have formed themselves over the components below them; they are extremely fragile. We used the river water that was continually bubbling up from below to gently rinse off the components. However, MHM had to halt exposure of the deck planks at a certain point to prevent damage to them. The tops of futtocks were also located, offset from the deck beams. MHM updated Twitter and Facebook in the evening.



As Trench 1 went deeper, Olson had to step into the river and Merriman had to extend out over it. Height was a factor.

The intact starboard gunwale and its associated components.

The flat portions are deck planks (1) undulating over part of the outer edge of the gunwale/top of rubrail (2), over the deck beams (3), and over the futtocks (4). Another deck plank is seen mostly submerged. The clamp (5) is just seen below the water.



Day 4: 18 October. Leaving Trench 1 open and water-filled, MHM opened Trench 2 five feet six inches further forward towards the wreck's bow. With the knowledge of where the gunwale was located in Trench 1, we came down directly on top of it in one hour without hitting the water table in the 2 foot by 2 foot trench. Excavation of Trench 2 required increased care, since the thick mud stuck to the wreck's structural components to the point that if completely removed, a layer of wood may come with it. With careful cleaning of the gunwale and the top of the rubrail, the water table was hit and water seeped in from below outside the outer hull. Deck planks exist in this trench as well, undulating over the gunwale and other components under them. MHM updated Twitter and Facebook in the evening.



Top Right: The view of Trench 1 in the morning, with the water level matching the river water level. Top Left: Undisturbed Trench 2 location.

Bottom: Trench 2 just as the gunwale was located and after partial cleaning when the water table was hit.

Day 5: 19 October. MHM conducted survey for the purposes of acquiring angles in order to place the *Andy Gibson* wreck on a site plan accurately. We established our own datum and 'shot in' what we believe is a mooring post imbedded high up in the riverbank, Trenches 1 and 2, as well as a cylinder supporting rod that we located by probing in the river below Trench 1. Jeanne Schram of the Aitkin Independent Age

visited the site again and took photographs of the exposed gunwale in Trench 1 and we answered her questions about our findings to date. Olson excavated further in Trench 1, 'tunneling' down outside the gunwale to expose the outer hull. A substantial rubrail was identified with rounded corners. Meticulous cleaning of Trench 2's gunwale continued and the clamp was located. Water seeping through the bottom of the trench was used to clean the wooden components as much as possible and manual cleaning of the wreck halted due to the high risk of damaging the timbers. MHM placed protective coverings over the gunwales in Trenches 1 and 2, packed mud around the wreck's components, and filled the trenches with sandbags prior to leaving the site for a few days. MHM updated Twitter and Facebook in the evening.



MHM conducting survey at the *Andy Gibson* Wreck Site and a view from the 'mooring' piling looking toward Trenches 1 and 2 – west in the direction of the wreck's stern. Olson is seen using the top of a silo at a farm across the river as his 'zero' mark. Merriman is holding the stadia rod on a corner of Trench 1.





Top: The 'tunnel' dug into the riverbank mud outside the hull in Trench 1 and a view of the rubrail from inside the 'tunnel'. Bottom: Trenches 1 and 2 filled with sandbags.

Day 6: 24 October. MHM spent a short day on site back-filling Trench 2. The sandbags and protective covering were removed from the trench and a piece of neon nylon tape with the words 'Maritime Heritage Minnesota October 2010' was placed on top of the deck planking to indicate that the matrix had been disturbed in that area. Mud was packed around the exposed components, the covering and sandbags were placed back into the trench, and then covered with mud. MHM began Trench 3 44.5 feet forward (east) of Trench 2 to determine if the gunwale survived that far forward. Twelve inches of soil were removed from a 2-foot by 4-foot trench. MHM updated Twitter and Facebook in the evening.



Trench 2 with mud-encased components prior to back-filling.

The area where Trench 3 was sunk prior to brush clearing and disturbance.



Day 7: 25 October. MHM conducted further survey of the wreck site, shooting in the corners of Trench 3. We resumed excavating Trench 3 and located the gunwale in an hour. Excavation slowed down and meticulous cleaning of the deck planks and rubrail edge took place, since like Trench 2, too much mud removal would damage the wreck. MHM updated Twitter and Facebook in the evening.



Survey and excavation of Trench 3 during grouse hunting season; blaze orange required.

The first view of the gunwale in Trench 3.



Day 8: 26 October. It rained all day, becoming a driving rain by mid-afternoon, and the river was rising throughout the day. MHM cleaned the gunwale as best as possible within the confines of the water filling the trench, but the danger of damaging the wreck became too great. Trench 3 was back-filled after a protective covering was placed on the gunwale. We then back-filled Trench 1, which already had standing water on top of the sandbags due to the rain. MHM updated Twitter and Facebook in the evening.

Trench 3's gunwale. The standing water was not from the river, it was rain that collected in the trench during the day. We used our underwater camera in its water-proof housing during much of the *Andy Gibson* Excavation for obvious reasons.



(left) Trench 3 back-filled.



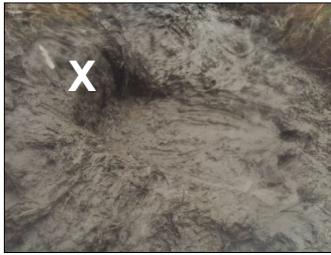
Back-filling Trench 1.

Day 9: 30 October. MHM returned to the *Andy Gibson* Wreck Site after three days and found the trenches completely submerged; even the 'mooring' piling was in the river. We noticed that a cut plank had floated into the water above the wreck and become lodged in some brush – we are confident that it is not part of the *Andy Gibson*. We had hoped that the river would not have risen so dramatically and that we could dig a small trench further east, forward toward the bow. We came prepared to conduct more survey for the site plan, and took readings along the riverbank bluff at points before it dropped to the river. Twitter and Facebook was updated by MHM in the evening.



The location of Trenches 1 and 2 after the rain, under 3 feet of water.

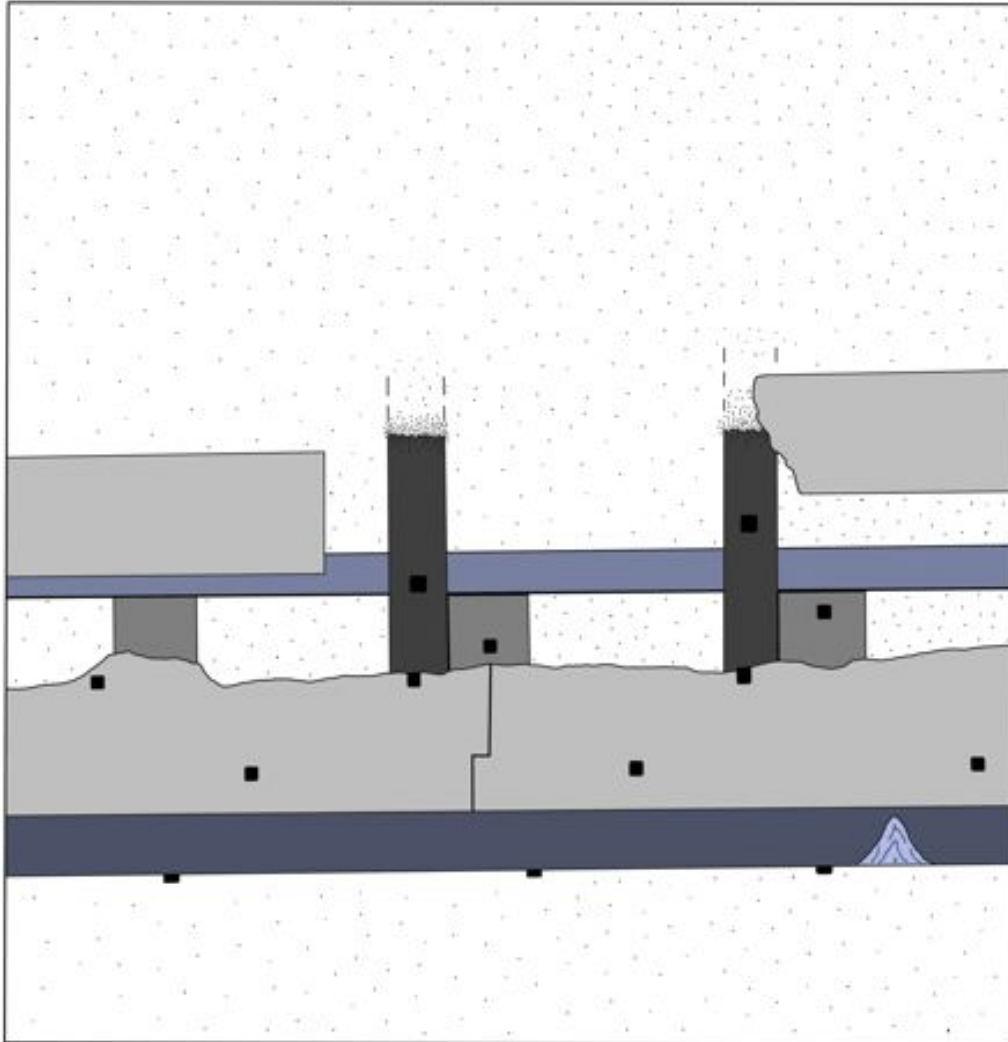
The location of Trench 3. Note the rebar with some green tape at the tip. The rebar is stuck into the mud at the top edge of Trench 3, marked below.



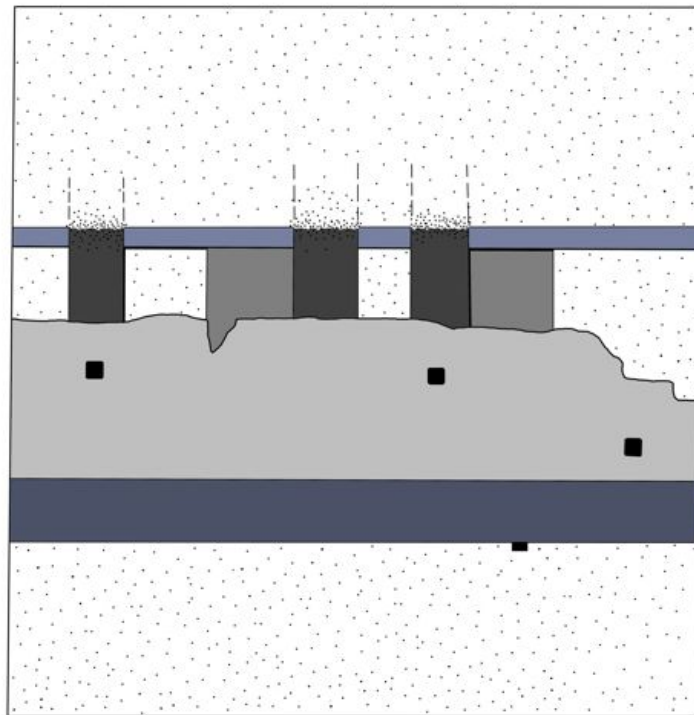
Conclusion

Upon completion of the fieldwork, MHM conducted research at the Minnesota Historical Society, the office of the *Aitkin Independent Age*, and the State Capitol. The historical account of *Andy Gibson*'s working life above was derived from this research. MHM also gathered together drawings made and photographs taken in 2008 and 2009 of the wreck site and combined them into a site plan. The plan encompasses those parts of the *Andy Gibson* that is exposed during low water conditions and the portions of the gunwale documented in 2010. The plan will be augmented in subsequent years as MHM dives on the portions of the wreck that lie in the river channel, always submerged. MHM completed a National Register of Historic Places Nomination form and submitted it to the National Register Archaeologist in the State Historic Preservation Office for approval. MHM also filled out an updated site form for the site and submitted it to the Office of the State Archaeologist.

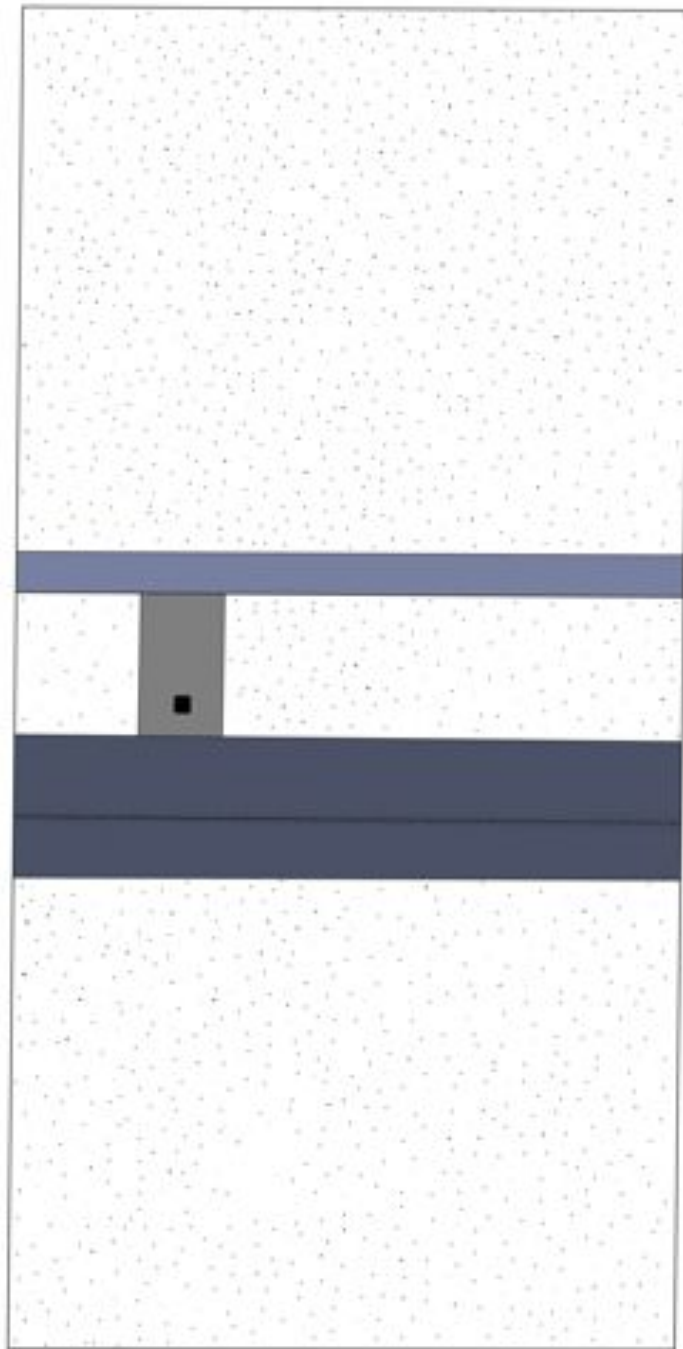
Andy Gibson's intact gunwale is the only known example to have survived on any Mississippi River steamer wreck. Further, the 'dry dock' cradle is a maritime feature that may be the only one of its kind known in the underwater archaeological record. These two facts alone attest to the significance of the *Andy Gibson* Wreck Site. Beyond this, however, *Andy Gibson* is a physical representation of what current 'common wisdom' dictates does not exist: a Headwaters Mississippi River steamboat. The small dimensions of her deck beams suggest a light construction attribute that sets her apart from steamboats constructed below St. Anthony Falls. Further study will probably expose more such characteristics unique to a Headwaters steamboat. *Andy Gibson* was a steamer that reflects geographically-specific construction characteristics that allowed her to successfully navigate the shallow and rapids-laden waters of the Mississippi River between Aitkin, Sandy Lake, and Grand Rapids for eight years, carrying passengers and cargo that formed the basis of Aitkin and Itasca County commerce in the late 19th Century.



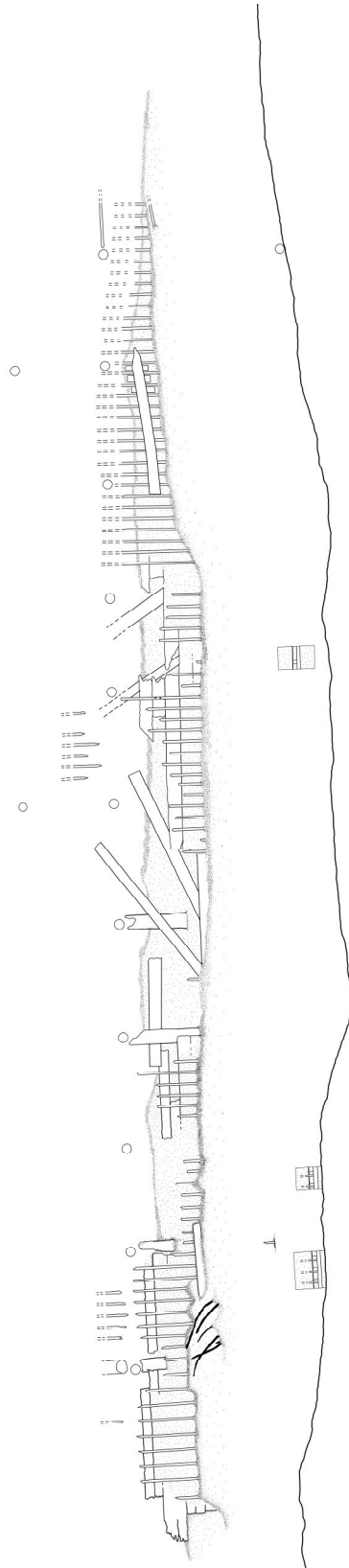
Trench 1



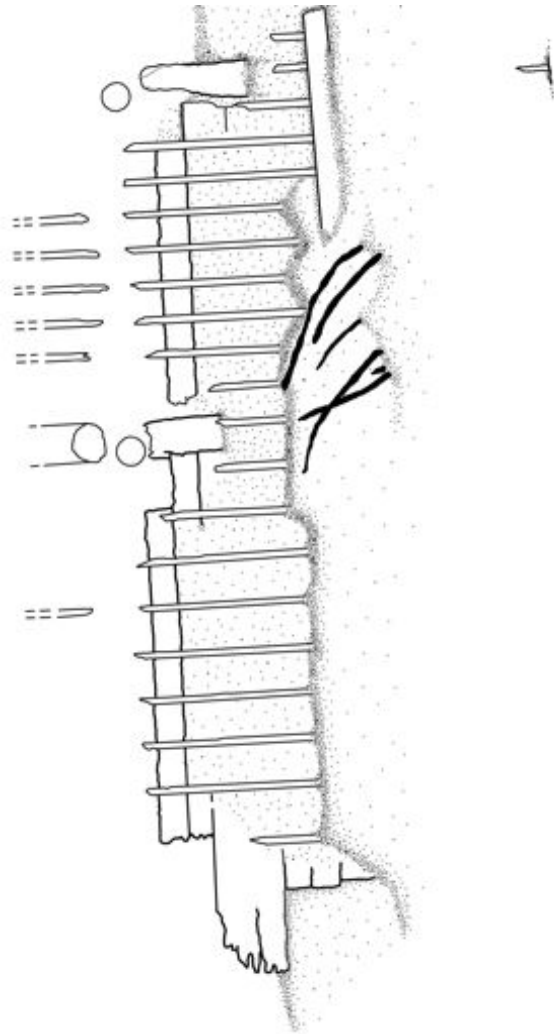
Trench 2



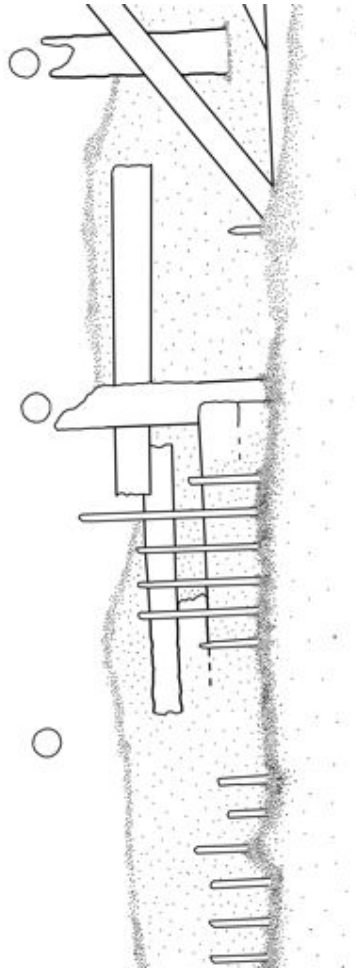
Trench 3



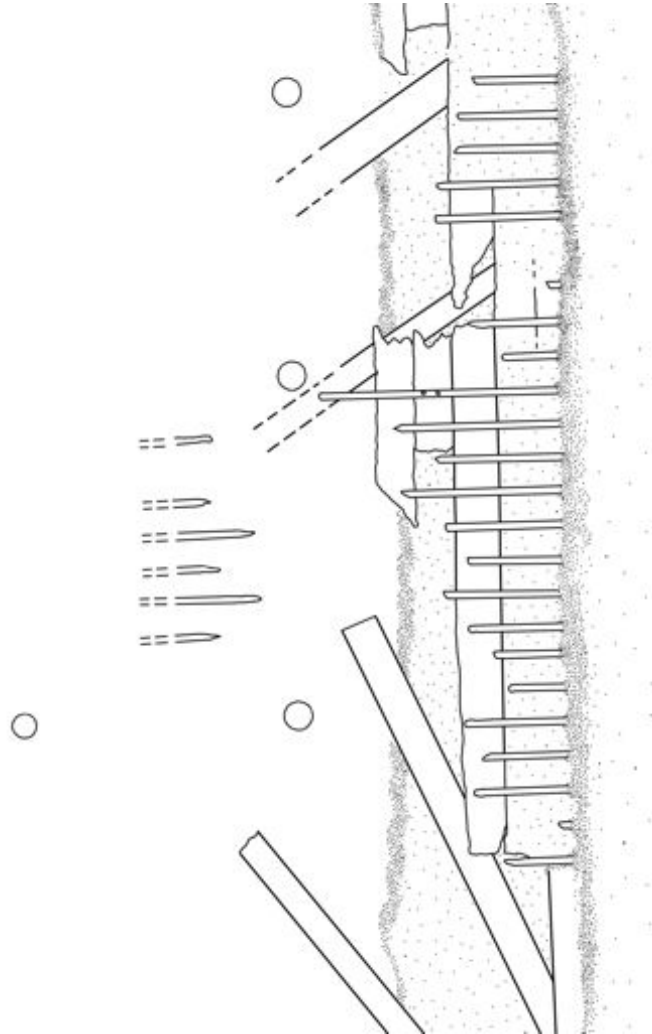
Andy Gibson Wreck Site Plan. The stern is at the bottom and Trenches 1-3 are one the right side of the plan.



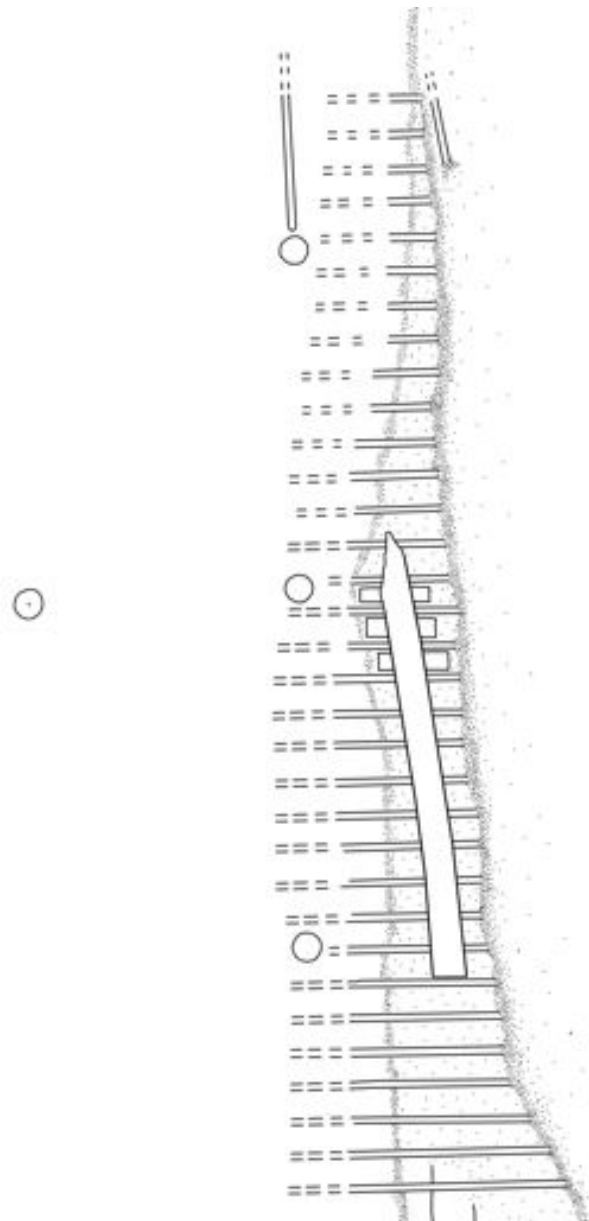
The stern section of the wreck.



The section of the wreck just forward of the stern.



The section of the wreck amidships, just aft of the bow.



The bow section of the wreck.

Appendix A

Aitkin Independent Age | Excavation of Andy Gibson underway

10/20/10 8:41 PM



Wednesday, October 20, 2010

Excavation on Andy Gibson underway

Wednesday, October 20, 2010



Ann Merriman and Christopher Olson are searching for a gunwale on the Andy Gibson wreck.

Both are nautical archeologists for Maritime Heritage Minnesota (MHM) and have been working in the Aitkin area for a few years.

Ann Merriman and Chris Olson, nautical archeologists, are clearing the bank of the Mississippi River at the wreck of the Andy Gibson. They want to determine if the boat's gunwale lies under the bank.

"We work for the people of Minnesota," said Merriman, "and want people to learn from our research."

Without a concerted effort, Minnesota's historic and cultural treasures are in danger of being lost to time, both said. The Minnesota Historical Society awarded a Minnesota Historical and Cultural Heritage Grant in the amount of \$6,958 to Maritime Heritage Minnesota with MHM and its supporters providing \$5,340 in matching in-kind donations. The grant was approved by the society's awards committee in September and supports the steamer wreck Andy Gibson excavation and National Register of Historic Places nomination. The project began on Oct. 15 in Aitkin.

Excavation

The sternwheel steamer Andy Gibson plied the waters of the Mississippi River between the towns of Aitkin and Grand Rapids from 1884-1892. Andy Gibson, when she was constructed, was 130 feet long with a 26 foot beam; during her working life, she was lengthened to 140 feet long and must have been a sight, navigating the winding river. The Andy Gibson excavation and National Register of Historic Places nomination is a project of enduring value because it will uncover and document a portion of this wreck's starboard side gunwale that has been buried in the bank of the Mississippi River for decades - and reburied to keep it safe.

The data collected during this partially dry nautical excavation will be combined with preliminary measurements made of the submerged portions of the shipwreck made by Maritime Heritage Minnesota in previous seasons. The site was recognized by MHM as unique in the United States, since the wreck lies on a dock-like platform that acted during her working life as a safeguard against grounding - and therefore breaking her back or capsizing - during low water conditions.

The major goals of this project are to produce as complete a site plan as is possible at this time, and to nominate the wreck to the National Register of Historic Places. MHM hopes a successful NRHP nomination will provide an extra layer of protection for this significant and unique piece of Minnesota's maritime history, as the wreck has suffered from repeated illegal looting over the

past five decades.

"We want to find out how much more of the Gibson exists," said Merriman. The excavation was expected to take five or six days.

Summer survey

MHM spent a lot of time this

past summer doing sonar survey work in the Mississippi to discover if there are more wrecks to be found.

"We found 41 anomalies," said Merriman. "Now, we have to dive to them."

There will be further study on piers and landings, also, such as at Swan River, Swan River logging camp, the Mississippi Hill City bridge and an area at Big Sandy Lake.

Merriman said they will have to write for more grants to pursue that study.

Help needed

Merriman said that they could use the assistance of people living around the river who own pontoons.

The pontoons are useful when diving to marked areas.

If you can help, e-mail maritimemn@aol.com.

Appendix B

Aitkin Independent Age | Archeologists find what they were searching for

WEDNESDAY 10:52 PM



Wednesday, October 27, 2015

Archeologists find what they were searching for

By JEANNE SCHRAM

Wednesday, October 27, 2015



Ann Merriman and Christopher Olson bail out water to get another look.



Finding the gunwale.

Nautical licensed state archeologists Ann Merriman and Chris Olson have found what they were looking for in the wreck of the Andy Gibson.

"The gunwale is there and intact," said Merriman last week following their discovery. "They did use ceiling planking and wood clamps."

That means the 1880's era sternwheel steamer was traditionally-built. It is permanently resting in the Mississippi River near the outskirts of Aitkin.

High waters in the river slowed their efforts in excavating the riverbank, but the excavation revealed the gunwale and some deck planking, which "wouldn't have survived if it hadn't been embedded in the river bank," said Olson.

The couple is also recording elevation, distances and angles. When their work is completed, the site will be refilled as it was.

Their non-profit organizations, Maritime Heritage Minnesota, received a grant from the Minnesota Historical Society for this excavation and subsequent nomination of the Andy Gibson wreck for the National Register of Historical Places.

There are only two known wrecks - at this point - in Minnesota's portion of the Mississippi River - Andy Gibson and Swan in Aitkin. Andy Gibson is the only wreck of the two with an intact gunwale.

Of the 2,300 mile length of the Mississippi River outside of Minnesota, only six wrecks have been documented to any extent and only 24 are known to exist (one in Wisconsin, five in Arkansas, and 18 in Mississippi, of which only three are steamers and only two of them have been rudimentarily documented). So, only two Mississippi River steamer wrecks outside of Minnesota have been documented to any extent.

"As far as we can tell," said Merriman, "Andy Gibson is the only Mississippi River steamer wreck with an intact

gunwale - the Bertrand and Arabia have intact gunwales and while they may have been on the Mississippi River during their working lives at some point - did not wreck in the Mississippi and actually concentrated their travel on the Missouri River. There are a couple other steamers with intact gunwales that have been studied as well, but they aren't in the Mississippi either."

"The Gibson is a rarity among Mississippi riverboat wrecks," said Olson.

If Maritime Heritage Minnesota can obtain more grants, the pair and their volunteers will return next summer to dive on some of the wrecks.

Appendix C

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Andy Gibson steamer resurfaces as subject of study School children and scholars will learn about Aitkin's riverboat past

The lore of the Mississippi Man has been studying the great river that bisects Minnesota since the most ancient settlements of the Native Americans and the white man. In the steamboat era of the late 1800s and early 1900s, all matter of commerce and goods for farmers and businessmen traveled the river, as did passengers on business and on midnight moonlight excursions for dancing and sight-seeing.

Their mode of travel was steamships, wooden beauties that could hold 150 people and a ton of cargo, as did the Andy Gibson, a famous workhorse of a steamship that set the first speed record for a round trip from Aitkin to Grand Rapids and back.

Ann Memman and Christopher Olson of Maritime Heritage Minnesota were

awarded a \$6,968 grant to excavate the steamer Andy Gibson and nominate it to the National Register of Historic Places.

The grant is a Minnesota Historical and Cultural Heritage award with matching in-kind donations of \$5,140 to be provided by Maritime Heritage Minnesota and its supporters.

MHM was organized in 2005 to preserve, conserve, and when necessary, excavate Minnesota's finite maritime archaeological and historical resources.

The two plan to study 225 river miles in Aitkin, Itasca and Cass counties and to document underwater wrecks. The steamer Andy Gibson, which sank at Potter's Landing by Aitkin's sewer plant, and the Swan, sunk upriver a week, will be the priorities

for study. They believe there are even more undiscovered steamer and ferry wrecks along that stretch of river.

Their study will be published for various maritime and river lore scholars to use and will be available to the public and school children.

All about the Andy Gibson: Penning the Aitkin Historical Society's files reveals that the Andy Gibson was a working boat that plied the Mississippi River between Aitkin and Grand Rapids from 1886 to 1889.

Built at 130 feet, it was expanded to 140 feet and could carry 100 tons of freight and 150 passengers.

It set a record, racing to Grand Rapids and back to Aitkin in 37 hours in what was previously a 51-hour run. The smaller, lighter Fawn steamer was around it two weeks later



The hull of the Andy Gibson as it appeared in 2006.

making the trip in 36 hours.

The Gibson hosted passengers for midnight cruises up and down the river and to Rice River and other landings.

In 1891, the Potter Company bought the ship for logging. In 1892, the boilers and heating system were removed

and went into the Potter Store in Aitkin.

Years later, in 1906, the rest of the interior equipment was sold to a logging operation in Bena, and was used for log hauling on Lake Winnepigoshish.

Continued on Page 6

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Andy Gibson steamer resurfaces | Continued from Page 1



This map of the Aitkin area shows the sunk paddlewheel steamers, the Andy Gibson, left and the Swan, right.



Rudder parts of the Andy Gibson. Sadly, the old steamship wreck has been extensively looted over the 100-plus years it has rested in the Mississippi.

The hull of the Andy Gibson was sunk at Potter's Landing, still lying along the Mississippi in the town of Aitkin near the sewer plant. The hull filled with river sludge and Mississippi Mud. However, in the early days after its sinking, Euclid Chatelle and other boys used it as a diving platform. And, over the years, when droughts came, the bones of the Gibson were exposed, leading to photographs and articles in the local press. Dry years when the Gibson was exposed for press coverage included 1967, 1984 and 2006.

Early newspaper account. Here is the early newspaper account of the Gibson being dismantled:

"Remains of steamer Andy Gibson are sold

The old river steamer Andy Gibson, long since out of commission, was a giant in her day and while well remembered by the old residents of Aitkin and Grand Rapids was supposed to have been heard of for the last time as far as future usefulness is concerned. This, however, is not entirely correct as the remaining

castings and machinery have been bought and shipped to Bena where a large new steamer will be built to ply the waters of Lake Winnepigoshish. G. E. Godfrey of Ball Club has been here during the past week loading the car with machinery which was bought from the Potter-Casey Co."

Riverboat History In the heyday of the steamship, there were 25 river stops between Aitkin and Grand Rapids. However, farmers and others living along the Mississippi's banks could hang a flag or set off a flare. The steamship would stop and pick up produce or livestock for market or take orders to deliver merchandise the following week.

Steamship captains were able to conduct marriages and funerals and were prominent community leaders along the river's route. The steamships were essential to commerce of the time, hauling people, lumber, homes, pigs, fresh milk, catalog orders and all products imaginable.

Firsthand account. Serena Goward was an excitable young lady at the

time the Andy Gibson was launched on the Mississippi. Her brother, Hemen Haugen, was one of the engineers and so Serena was given unparalleled access to the boat and often got to travel with her friends at the company's expense.

On the first voyage she remembers, Fred Bonners was the captain, "my brother, Hemen Haugen, was one of the engineers, John Lyons was the pilot, Johnny Paine the cook and Jim Gibson was bookkeeper clerk... There were some men who helped load and unload. Some of these were white, but Mr. Lowell [E.B. Lowell, one of three owners] liked to obtain Indians for help. He spoke Chippewa quite a little and he liked to help the Indians."

John Lyons, the pilot, was an Indian and a top-notch river man who "knew every trick and turn in the river. He had the blood of a true pilot. In the upper river his two daughters each married a Tibbets boy."

Serena formed a friendship with the cook Johnny Paine, who fed her beans baked in the ground and lemon pie.

The ship's journal shows they took in \$629 for the first trip.

Serena describes the cargo when she and a friend boarded the Andy Gibson: "We crossed the gang plank into the lower part of the boat, past workmen loading and by piles of boxes and bundles of freight, horse, cows, pigs and everything imaginable."

She told of one midnight excursion to Selly's Ranch. Her brother had the evening off and came on board as a passenger bringing along a lady friend. The substitute engineer let the boiler burn up, the ship ran aground and Hemen Haugen had to "change into his overalls and go to work."

Much too soon, the Gibson was retired and sunk, as the railroad, horses and automobiles provided the transportation needed for commerce and socializing.

"There were the good old days on the river," Serena said in an interview, "but still it seems to me that the river washes more lightly as it ripples over the spot where sleeps the rolling hull of the steamer Andy Gibson."

www.NewsHopper.net

News from Maritime Heritage Minnesota

Ann Merriman and Christopher Olson from the Maritime Heritage of Minnesota had this to say about their Andy Gibson project: The Andy Gibson Dry Nautical Excavation and NHP Nomination project was made possible in part by the Minnesota Historical and Cultural Heritage Grant program, aka - The Legacy Amendment.

The scope of work included the Mississippi River Aitkin County Survey - a side and down imaging sonar survey of the 104 miles of the river in Aitkin County. This was conducted in August 2010 and we are still analyzing the results. We will be claiming four new maritime archaeological sites for Aitkin County beyond the two already known sites of the Andy Gibson and Swan wrecks in Aitkin. Three of the new sites are landings and the fourth is a steamboat crib on the Sandy River at the confluence with the Mississippi. We identified 250 anomalies during the survey using the sonar, and after analysis, we've determined that we need to dive on 41 of them to determine if they are archaeological sites. This does not necessarily mean steamboat wrecks, but also possible flatboats, wanagans, dock structures, small personal craft, rowboats, steam launches, etc. We hope to write one or two grants to dive on the sites next summer. The survey project was also made possible in part by the Minnesota Historical and Cultural Heritage Grant program, aka - The Legacy Amendment.

Maritime Heritage Minnesota had three primary goals for the Andy Gibson project this year: 1. To determine if her starboard side gunwale was still intact in the riverbank and document it. We found the gunwale and other associated boat parts - deck planking, deck beams, futocks, clamp, rub rail - intact. Andy Gibson's gunwale is the only intact one of any Mississippi River wreck that we know of; 2. Complete a plan view site plan of the wreck site as far as we can that includes MHM's 2008, 2009, and 2010 work on the site; and 3. Nominate the wreck to the National Register of Historic Places.

We met our first goal - the gunwale is in great shape under the river bank - we opened three trenches and dug down to the wreck, finding the gunwale rather quickly. We drew the exposed boat parts, took dozens of photographs, and back-filled the trenches. We left written evidence on non-biodegradable blaze orange ribbon that MHM was there - and left the wreck exactly as we found her. We're still working on the second and third goals.

During the excavation, we also conducted some survey using our dumpy level and stadia rod so that we can fix the wreck site properly on maps. We also used a very precise GPS unit to get the exact latitude/longitude of the wreck, her gunwale, and the bench mark that we created on site for our future use.

A major part of MHM's mission is to educate the public about shipwrecks. Shipwrecks in Minnesota are owned by the State of Minnesota, and are protected by state and federal laws as archaeological sites. Andy Gibson, and all underwater sites that are 50 years old or older, all under the Abandoned Shipwreck Act of 1987, a federal law prohibiting the looting of wreck sites, or souvenir collecting. The archaeologists for MHM are trained nautical and terrestrial archaeologists and are licensed by the State of Minnesota, and our goals are to document, conserve, and preserve sites, not damage or destroy them. Archaeology is not treasure-hunting or salvaging, both of which are illegal. In an effort to educate the public, to date all of our written work is free for everyone to download at the Internet Archive: <http://www.archive.org/search.php?query=maritim%20heritage%20minnesota> or our web site <http://www.maritimeheritagemn.org>. The public can follow our progress at our Facebook page and Twitter feed: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Maritime-Heritage-Minnesota/96198780537?ref=ts>.



The Andy Gibson is full up with passengers for a summer excursion.



The steamer Andy Gibson is resting along the riverbank.

Appendix D

MINNESOTA ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE FORM
 OFFICE OF THE STATE ARCHAEOLOGIST
 Post Office Box 5500, St. Paul, MN 55155-0500 (612) 224-2729

SITE #: 21-AR-109 **Site Name: Andy Gibson** **Agency/Field #:**
(Add agency #/New Site)

☐ New Site ☒ Site Update **OSA License #: 11-001, 11-012** **SHPO BC #:**

Type of Fieldwork: ☐ Reconnaissance Phase I **Date(s) of This Fieldwork:** 10/15/2010-10/19/2010
☒ Evaluation Phase II 10/24/2010-10/26/2010
☐ Excavation Phase III 10/30/2010

NHP Status: ☐ Listed ☐ Determined Eligible ☐ CEI(106) ☐ CNEI(106) ☒ Undetermined

LOCATIONAL INFORMATION

County: Aitkin **City/Twp. Name:** Aitkin **SHPO Sub-Region:**
(see map at instructions)

USGS 7.5 Quadrangle Map (name and year): Aitkin Quadrangle, 1973

Township: Aitkin **Range:** T 47 N R 27 W **Section:** 23 **Sections (at least 2):** NE 1/4, SW 1/4
Township: **Range:** **Section:** **Sections (at least 2):**
Township: **Range:** **Section:** **Sections (at least 2):**

UTM Coordinates (less than 10 acres use center; over 10 acres define polygon around site; draw points on USGS):
Zone: 12 **Datum:** 1927 ☐ 1983 **Method:** ☐ USGS Map ☒ GPS ☐ Other
Point 1: Easting 445058.70 Northing 5150320.05
Point 2: Easting Northing
Point 3: Easting Northing
Point 4: Easting Northing
Point 5: Easting Northing

SITE CHARACTERISTICS

Acres: 0.12 **Site Dimensions:** N-S 40.2 m E-W 12.2 m **Maximum Cultural Depth (if known):** 2.4 m

Site Description (✓ all that apply, but only one check per line):
☐ single artifact ☐ lithic scatter ☐ artifact scatter
☐ burial mound (number of mounds _____) ☐ non-mound lone grave ☐ non-mound cemetery
☐ petroglyph ☐ pictograph ☐ petroform
☐ surface features (list below)
☒ other: shipwreck and "dry dock" cradle

Surface Features (✓ all that apply): ☐ earthwork ☐ pit/depression ☐ foundation/ruin ☐ other: _____

Inferred Site Function (✓ all that apply): ☐ habitation ☐ mortuary ☐ farm ☐ industrial ☒ transportation
☐ Other (list): _____ ☐ unknown

Current Land Use (list approximate % for all that apply):
☐ cultivated ☐ fallow ☐ commercial ☐ recreational ☐ industrial ☐ residential
☐ 20% woodland ☐ grassland ☐ 80% water-covered ☐ other:

Surface Visibility (list approximate % for all that apply):
☐ excellent ☐ good 100% (depending on water level) fair ☐ poor/none

Degree of Disturbance (list approximate % for all that apply or ✓ unassessed):
☐ 10% minimal ☐ moderate ☐ 10% heavy ☐ completely destroyed ☐ 80% unassessed

Current Threats to Site: (✓ all that apply or ✓ none known)
☒ erosion ☐ development ☐ agricultural ☒ other: looting, ice, currents, floating logs ☐ none known

MINNESOTA ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE FORM

SITE #: 20-AX-109

Site Name: Andy Gibson

Agency/Field #:

CULTURAL/TEMPORAL AFFILIATION

(list all that apply by level of certainty: 1 = confirmed; 2 = probable or if "not determined"):

Periods: ☐ not determined ☐ Contact (1650-1837)
☐ Precontact (9500 BC - 1650 AD) ☒ Post-Contact (1837-1945)

Precontact Context: (list all that apply by level of certainty; if unable to discern specific context, ✓ here (✓,))

Fulvian Tradition ☐ not determined ☐ Fulvian ☐ Late/late Point/Plano
☐ Clovis ☐ Eastern Fluted ☐ other:

Archaic Tradition ☐ not determined ☐ Prairie ☐ Riverine
☐ Shield ☐ Lake-Forest ☐ other:

Woodland Tradition ☐ not determined ☐ Fox Lake ☐ Laurel
☐ SE Mn Early ☐ C Mn Transitional ☐ Lake Benton
☐ Brainerd ☐ Blackduck-Kathio ☐ Pinnomani/Sandy Lake
☐ Havana-Roland ☐ SE Mn Late ☐ Rainy River Late
☐ other:

Plains Village Tradition ☐ not determined ☐ Cambria ☐ Great Oasis ☐ Big Stone
☐ other: _____

Mississippian Tradition ☐ not determined ☐ Silverdale ☐ other:

Ojibwa Tradition ☐ not determined ☐ Blue Earth ☐ Orr ☐ other:

Contact Context: (list all that apply by level of certainty; if unable to discern specific context, ✓ here (✓,))

American Indian ☐ not determined ☐ Dakota ☐ Ojibwa ☐ other: _____

Euro-American ☐ not determined ☐ British ☐ other:
☐ French ☐ Initial US

Post-Contact Context: (list all that apply by level of certainty; if unable to discern specific context, ✓ here (✓,))

☐ Indian Communities & Reservations (1837-1954) ☐ St. Croix Triangle Lumbering (1830s-1900s)
☐ Early Agriculture & River Settlement (1840-1870) ☐ Railroads & Agricultural Development (1870-1940)
☒ Northern MN Lumbering (1870-1900s) ☐ Iron Ore Industry (1880s-1945)
☒ Tourism & Recreation (1870-1945) ☐ Urban Centers (1870-1940)

Approximate Post-Contact Occupation/Site Formation Date(s): 1832-1906

Context Assignment/Dating Methods (✓ all that apply):

☒ artifact type/style ☐ feature type ☐ radiometric ☐ relative stratigraphy ☐ geomorphology

☒ historic accounts (list) Askie Independent log stories of boat's construction, working life, trade construction, & removal of equip., dated log books at ACBS

☐ historic maps (list)

☐ other(s) (specify):

(For radiometric dates, attach photocopies of laboratory sheets if available.)

MATERIALS PRESENT (✓ all that apply):**Basic Artifact Categories****Ceramics**

☐ Aboriginal
☐ Euro-American

Lithics

☐ projectile points
☐ other chipped stone tools
☐ debris
☐ ground/picked stone
☐ ITW

Biological Remains

☐ animal
☐ human
☐ unidentified bone
☐ seeds/nuts
☐ charcoal

Historic Materials

☐ glass
☒ metal
☐ brick
☒ other: worked wood

MHS 71-01

MINNESOTA ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE FORM

page 3

SITE #: 21-AK109

Site Name: Andy Gibson

Agency/Field #:

Major Exotic Materials (✓ all that apply):

- ☐ calcite ☐ native copper ☐ Hesse orthoquartzite
☐ Knife River Flint ☐ obsidian ☐ other:

Diagnostic Artifacts:

Ceramic: Prehistoric Types/Wares/Temper

Historic

Prehistoric Lithics:

Glass:

Metal: nails, spikes, washers

Other: gunwale, rubrail, clamp, fasteners, dock beams, floors, water hull planking, cradle timbers, cradle pilings

ENVIRONMENTAL DATA Current Topographic Setting (✓ all that apply):

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| Distance from Water | Estuaries | Lacustrine |
| <input type="checkbox"/> general upland | <input type="checkbox"/> fan | <input type="checkbox"/> interfluve |
| <input type="checkbox"/> terrace edge | <input type="checkbox"/> terrace/bluff top | <input type="checkbox"/> peninsula |
| <input type="checkbox"/> hilltop | <input type="checkbox"/> stream-stream junction | <input type="checkbox"/> island |
| <input type="checkbox"/> glacial beach ridge | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> bluff-base | <input type="checkbox"/> isthmus |
| <input type="checkbox"/> rock outcrop | <input type="checkbox"/> cave/shelter | <input type="checkbox"/> general shoreline |
| <input type="checkbox"/> other: _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> floodplain | <input type="checkbox"/> bog/slowly/slow bottom |
| | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: (river channel) | <input type="checkbox"/> other: |

Topographic Feature Name from USGS Map: _____

OWNERSHIP INFORMATION

Source and Date of Ownership Information (e.g., plat map, county recorder's office, personal communication, etc.):

Ownership Type (list approximate % for all that apply; if unknown ✓ here _____):

☐ Federal ☒ State ☐ Local (public) ☐ Tribal ☐ Private

Land Owner (name and address if known):

CURRENT INVESTIGATION INFORMATION

Methods/Techniques Employed (✓ all that apply):

- ☐ informant report ☐ small diameter soil coring (~1" diameter) ☐ surface survey
☐ shovel testing ☒ formal test units ☐ mechanical testing max. test depth
☐ geomorphological survey (specify): _____
☐ geophysical survey (specify): _____
☒ other: documentation during low water exposure, side-imaging sonar

Informant Name and Address (if known):

 Known Collectors/Collections: Aitkin County Historical Society has some timbers & the starboard side rudder
 Artifact Repository (name and accession numbers or repository agreement number):

Most Recent Survey Report - Title, Author, Date: Mississippi River Aitkin County Survey, Maritime Heritage Minnesota, 2010

Major Previous Bibliographic Reference(s) to Site: '2008 Nautical Archaeological Assessment of the Steamer Wreck Swan (21AK84) and Andy Gibson (21AK0009)'

Principal Investigator (name and affiliation): Ann Merriman and Christopher Olson, Maritime Heritage Minnesota

Form Completed By (name and date): Ann Merriman and Christopher Olson, 11 March 2011

MAPS: Attach/include original scale copy of 7.5' USGS map with site location clearly outlined or designated.

 Attach a sketch map if surface features present, if sub-surface testing done, or if complicated boundaries/setting.
 Sketch map must have reproducible datum, scale, north arrow, and legend if symbols are used.

Inv. Form: MINNESOTA ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE FORM - CONTINUATION SHEET page 100

SITE #: 21-AK109

Site Name: Andy Gibson

Agency/Field #:



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION (Reason for Update or Survey, Location, Site Characteristics, Materials Present, Setting, Archaeological Methods, etc.; attach extra sheets as needed.)

MHM sank three small trenches in the riverbank to determine if the Andy Gibson's gunwale had survived - see report for details - and we recorded accurate GPS readings for the site when returned to the original 2008 site files.

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- 1883b *Aitkin Age*, 27 October.
- 1884a *Aitkin Age*, 26 April.
- 1884b *Aitkin Age*, 3 May.
- 1884c *Aitkin Age*, 17 May.
- 1884d *Aitkin Age*, 24 May.
- 1884e *Aitkin Age*, 14 June.
- 1884f *Aitkin Age*, 28 June.
- 1884g *Aitkin Age*, 26 July.
- 1884h *Aitkin Age*, 16 August.
- 1884i *Aitkin Age*, 23 August.
- 1884j *Aitkin Age*, 30 August.
- 1884k *Aitkin Age*, 6 September.
- 1884l *Aitkin Age*, 13 September.
- 1884m *Aitkin Age*, 27 September.
- 1885a *Aitkin Age*, 25 April.
- 1885b *Aitkin Age*, 2 May.
- 1885c *Aitkin Age*, 9 May.
- 1885d *Aitkin Age*, 16 May.
- 1885e *Aitkin Age*, 6 June.
- 1885f *Aitkin Age*, 13 June.
- 1885g *Aitkin Age*, 20 June.
- 1885h *Aitkin Age*, 27 June.
- 1885i *Aitkin Age*, 4 July.
- 1885j *Aitkin Age*, 11 July.
- 1885k *Aitkin Age*, 18 July.
- 1885l *Aitkin Age*, 25 July.
- 1885m *Aitkin Age*, 10 October.
- 1885n *Aitkin Age*, 17 October.
- 1885o *Aitkin Age*, 23 October.
- 1885p *Aitkin Age*, 31 October.
- 1885q *Aitkin Age*, 7 November.
- 1885r *Aitkin Age*, 14 November.
- 1886a *Aitkin Age*, 27 March.
- 1886b *Aitkin Age*, 1 May.
- 1886c *Aitkin Age*, 8 May.
- 1886d *Aitkin Age*, 15 May.
- 1886e *Aitkin Age*, 19 June.
- 1886f *Aitkin Age*, 26 June.
- 1886g *Aitkin Age*, 3 July.
- 1886h *Aitkin Age*, 10 July.
- 1886i *Aitkin Age*, 17 July.
- 1886j *Aitkin Age*, 24 July.

1886k *Aitkin Age*, 31 July.
1886l *Aitkin Age*, 21 August.
1886m *Aitkin Age*, 28 August.
1886n *Aitkin Age*, 4 September.
1886o *Aitkin Age*, 11 September.
1886p *Aitkin Age*, 18 September.
1886q *Aitkin Age*, 25 September.
1886r *Aitkin Age*, 2 October.
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1886t *Aitkin Age*, 16 October.
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1886v *Aitkin Age*, 20 November.
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1887l *Aitkin Age*, 3 September.
1887m *Aitkin Age*, 10 September.
1887n *Aitkin Age*, 17 September.
1887o *Aitkin Age*, 22 October.
1888a *Aitkin Age*, 10 March.
1888b *Aitkin Age*, 12 May.
1888c *Aitkin Age*, 19 May.
1888d *Aitkin Age*, 16 June.
1888e *Aitkin Age*, 23 June.
1888f *Aitkin Age*, 30 June.
1888g *Aitkin Age*, 28 July.
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1888i *Aitkin Age*, 11 August.
1888j *Aitkin Age*, 25 August.
1888k *Aitkin Age*, 8 September.
1888l *Aitkin Age*, 15 September.
1888m *Aitkin Age*, 22 September.
1888n *Aitkin Age*, 29 September.
1888o *Aitkin Age*, 24 November.
1889a *Aitkin Age*, 30 March.
1889b *Aitkin Age*, 27 April.
1889c *Aitkin Age*, 4 May.
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1889l *Aitkin Age*, 24 August.
1889m *Aitkin Age*, 31 August.
1889n *Aitkin Age*, 21 September.
1889o *Aitkin Age*, 21 December.
1889p *Aitkin Age*, 28 December.
1890a *Aitkin Age*, 4 January.
1890b *Aitkin Age*, 11 January.
1890c *Aitkin Age*, 19 April.
1890d *Aitkin Age*, 10 May.
1890e *Aitkin Age*, 31 May.
1890f *Aitkin Age*, 7 June.
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1891q *Aitkin Age*, 26 December.
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